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A History of the Latter-Day Settlement of Star Valley, Wyoming

Ray McCord Hall

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A HISTORY OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINT SETTLEMENT
OF STAR VALLEY, WYOMING

A Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Religious Instruction

Brigham Young University

Provo, Utah

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Ray M. Hall

July 1962

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has from its inception been a church on the move, sometimes because it was forced to it, and at other times to expedite growth.

Shortly after the organization of this church (1830) in New York state, its prophet-leader, Joseph Smith, moved with many of his followers to Ohio. The concept of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that Zion is and was in Missouri impelled Joseph Smith to have his ever-increasing flock go to Missouri. Various factors caused a general persecution of the Mormons there, however, keeping them on the move from one location to another.¹ Eventually they were forced completely out of Missouri and located at Nauvoo, Illinois. Here they built a thriving metropolis under the inspired leadership of their prophet. Nauvoo flourished for a time; but persecution followed the Saints there, too, and on June 27, 1844, mobsters took the life of Joseph Smith.

Political sympathy was not with this abused church, and mob violence continued even after the death of their

¹William E. Berrett, The Restored Church (10th ed., rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1961), pp. 116-118.

prophet. Brigham Young and the others of the Twelve Apostles took over the reins of leadership and determined to lead the Saints to a land ". . . so remote, that there will not need be any difficulty with the people and ourselves. . . ." ¹ Unreasonable pressure forced the Mormons to begin their "exodus" in the dead of winter, and extreme hardship and privation attended the move of these outcasts across the plains. The vanguard company of the Mormons, pioneers in a real sense, arrived in Salt Lake Valley July 24, 1847. It was here that they began anew to establish their culture.

Brigham Young was eager to expand the mountain domain. Periodically he sent colonizing parties into the numerous neighboring and distant valleys. ² He assured the people that the Saints could live any place that the Indian could live, and thus the intermountain west began to become a virtual Mormon empire. Even the presence of an opposing army failed to thwart the growth of this zealous people; their Zion blossomed as a rose.

The public announcement of plural marriage as a religious tenet in August of 1852 was the cause of more troublous times for the Mormons. Federal legislation and political pressure caused a great deal of trouble for this church that taught polygamy. The passage of the Edmunds Act of 1882

¹Carter E. Grant, The Kingdom of God Restored (2nd ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1957), p. 333.

²Berrett, op. cit., p. 285.

brought severe pressure upon the church to abandon the practice.¹ But the Mormons, firmly believing that they were doing the will of God, refused to bow to the will of men and sought havens of refuge. Mexico and Canada supplied the needed protection for those polygamists who were willing to go so far from their leaders and loved ones. Others retreated to high, isolated mountain valleys.

Purpose

One of the most remote of these retreats was Star Valley, Wyoming; and the purpose of this study is to give a general description of its settlement, of the difficulties of the early pioneers, and of the courage and resourcefulness with which they met their problems. It is to record permanently the significant events in the history of the valley--to give a general account, accurate insofar as possible, of the settlement of Star Valley by the Latter-day Saints. Justification for the writer's choice of subject is relatively simple. To Mormons, the history of their ancestors--their moves and motives, their homes and families, their weaknesses and strengths, their failures and successes--is important. The history of Star Valley has hitherto been a relatively unexplored field--and it is the writer's hope that this paper will be the means of preserving some of the richness of its heritage.

¹B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1930), VI, 43.

Method of procedure

The author has endeavored to discover and consult every available source of accurate information pertaining to his subject. He has interviewed many residents--present and former--of Star Valley and has attempted to substantiate their contributions by the written record wherever possible. He has consulted Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho history books, church history books, biographies of church leaders, journals, official stake and ward records, county records, newspaper files, personal diaries, and historical documents. He has written many letters to persons who he had reason to believe might have pertinent information, and some few of those bore fruit.

Having accumulated numerous file cards filled with notes and quotations, the process of organization and elimination was begun; and despite great care on the part of the author to avoid such repetition of effort, he still found it necessary to re-check some sources and seek out additional information on many subjects.

Once the chapter headings were decided upon and it was determined what information pertained to each, it remained only to write the history in as readable and interesting a manner as possible.

The author does not claim to have exhausted all sources of information on Star Valley nor to have verified beyond doubt all of the material herein included. He is aware of the existence of some allegedly good historical material, but to this

he was denied access. It was frequently deemed inadvisable to include the names of those who were "the first" to accomplish a given task because of conflicting claims and insufficient evidence; hence the history is, in some places, less specific than the author had intended. He has nevertheless made a sincere effort to discover as much information from as many sources as possible, to evaluate it objectively, and to present it logically.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY VALLEY

The general area

The area which comprises the present state of Wyoming includes territory which has been under the dominion of Spain, France, and Britain. The eastern part of the state, that is, all that lay east of the Continental Divide, came under the jurisdiction of the United States when this nation purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. A sizable section of what is now Albany and Carbon Counties came to be a part of the United States territory through the annexation of Texas in 1845; and the area which lies west of the Continental Divide and north of forty-two degrees north latitude was acquired by the United States in 1846 when the Oregon question was settled. At the close of the Mexican War in 1848 the southwestern part of the state was ceded to the United States. In 1868, Wyoming, with her present boundaries, was made a separate territory. Statehood was granted in 1890.¹

The early explorers and western immigrants who crossed Wyoming en route farther west did so with little affection for the territory. Washington Irving, after having journeyed

¹Franklin Campbell Smith, Early Religious Services in Wyoming (Laramie, Wyoming: The Laramie Printing Company, 1926), p. 1.

across the southern portion of Wyoming, had this to say:

It was a region almost as vast and trackless as the ocean. . . . this region, which resembles one of the immeasurable steppes of Asia, has not inaptly been termed 'the great American desert.' It spreads forth into undulating and treeless plains, and desolate sandy wastes wearisome to the eye from their extent and monotony. . . . It is a land where no man permanently abides. . . . which apparently defies civilization and the habitation of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the deserts of Arabia; and, like them, to be subject to the depredations of the marauder. Here may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamation of the 'debris' and 'abrasions' of former races, civilized and savage; the remains of broken and almost extinguished tribes; the descendants of wandering hunters and trappers; of fugitives from the Spanish and American frontiers; of adventurers and desperados of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness.¹

The valley proper

It is unfortunate that Irving did not have the pleasure of visiting Star Valley where his apt pen might have had a more pleasant tale to tell. David Lavender, in his discussion of the Lander Cut-off, has written: "At the western edge of Wyoming the Cut-off dropped into a timber-bordered, grassy-bottomed mountain valley that looked like heaven after the bleak wastes of southern Wyoming."²

The valley, lying about six thousand feet above sea level, is about fifty miles long from north to south and from five to ten miles in width and is enclosed by the Caribou and

¹Ibid., p. 2.

²David Lavender, The Big Divide (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1948), p. 208.

Salt River mountain ranges. Many of these lofty peaks soar to above 10,000 feet. The Salt River winds its way through the entire length of the valley, being fed by numerous canyon creeks and springs until it becomes a major tributary of the South Fork of the Snake River.

In reality two valleys combine to form Star Valley. The upper valley is separated from the lower by a short, narrow canyon; nevertheless, they are generally considered one. Natives proclaim the climate to be ideal, but less hardy people sing praises only to the pleasantly cool summers. By most standards the winters are long and cold. A snowfall of two and one-half to three feet is not uncommon and the mercury often dips to forty degrees below zero. A low of fifty-five degrees below zero has been recorded by the United States Weather Station.¹

In recent years the tourist trade has contributed an appreciable amount to the economy of the valley. Swift mountain streams abound in trout, and big game is plentiful. Many wealthy sportsmen from all over the United States return annually for the deer and elk hunts. Guiding these out-of-state hunters has become a profitable profession.²

¹Reported by Marvin Hepworth, Official United States Weather Recorder, Grover, Wyoming.

²Letter from Ruth J. Bradley, Chief, Historical Division, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming, May 18, 1962.

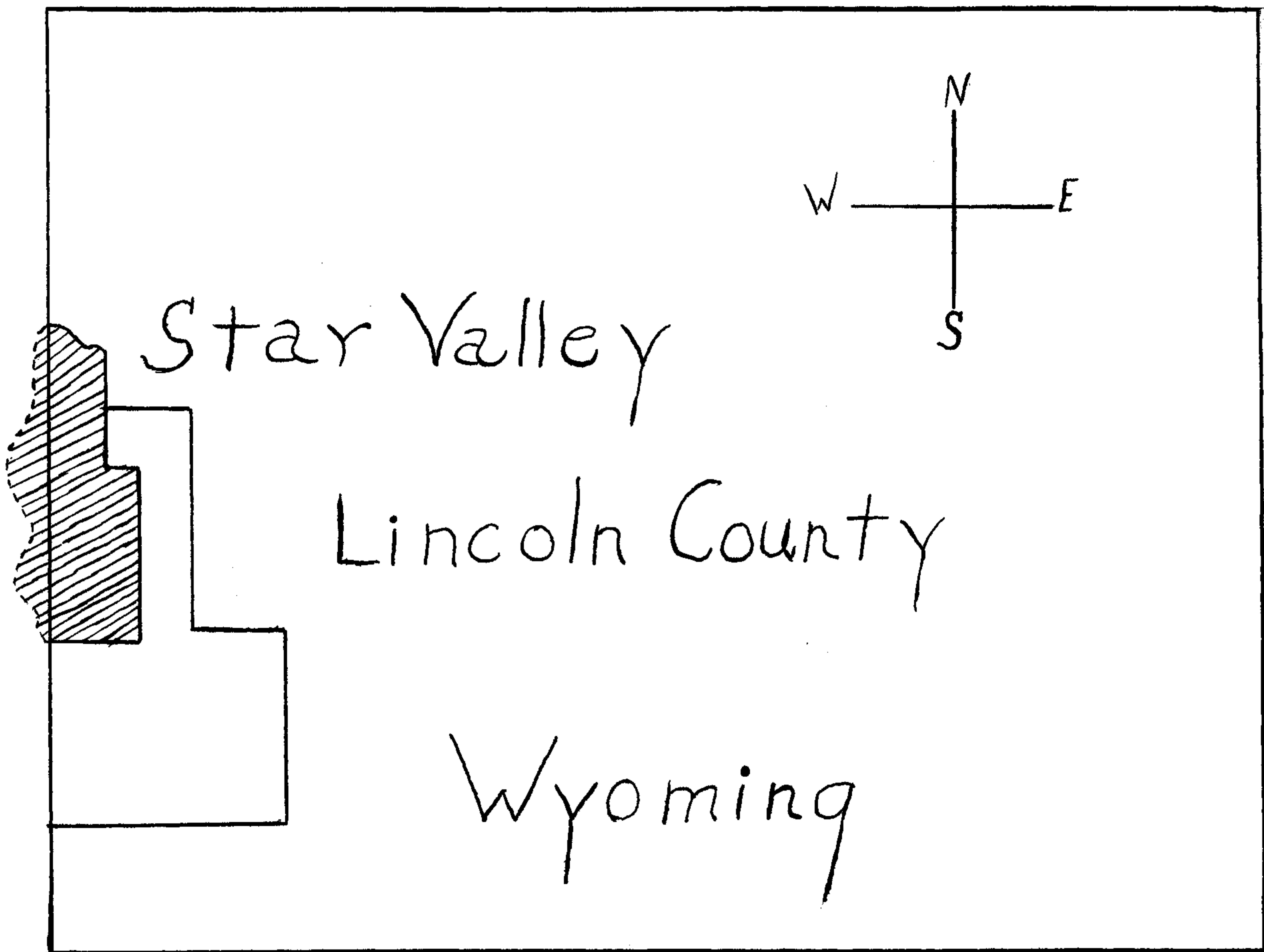


Fig. 1.--Location of Star Valley

The coming of the white man

Just as it is the outdoorsmen and nature lovers who best appreciate Star Valley today, so was it the hardiest, most daring of the race who first discovered it.

In 1809 the Missouri Fur Company sent a company of men west into the vicinity of Three Forks, Montana. These men-- Andrew Henry, John Hoback, Jacob Reznor, and Edward Robinson-- became discouraged because of marauding Indians and turned southwestward to the North Fork of the Snake River. Here they spent the winter of 1810-11 at Henry's Fort, near the present site of St. Anthony, Idaho. Henry journeyed on to Oregon, and regarding the other three Philip Ashton Rollins comments:

At this fort's abandonment in the spring of 1811, Robinson, Hoback and Reznor had gone eastward on a route which, save for a quite possible single divergence¹ . . . was probably identical with the course along which, though in reverse direction, they later were to guide the Astorians marching westward from the Aricara village to Henry's Fort.²

That same year, while on their way east to St. Louis, this trio met Wilson Price Hunt with his Astorians.³ Hunt invited them to turn back and re-engage in a trapping enterprise,

¹The entry in the Journal of Robert Stuart on Thursday September 17, 1812, indicates that Reznor, Hoback, Robinson and Miller who were then members of this party had been on the South Fork of the Snake River the previous year. The description referred to in Stuart's Journal corresponds with the locality near Alpine, Wyoming, in the northern end of present-day Star Valley.

²Philip Ashton Rollins, The Discovery of the Oregon Trail; Robert Stuart's Narratives (New York: Edward Eberstadt and Sons), p. 102.

³Wilson Price Hunt was conducting an exploring and trapping expedition for the wealthy John Jacob Astor of New York, hence the appellation "Astorians."

and they accepted his offer. It is interesting to note, however, that Hunt had originally planned to take his party up the Missouri River; but when he had heard the stories from Hoback and his associates of the trouble they had had while on the Missouri, he determined to let these three guide him back by the same route over which they had just come. It is probable, therefore, that the entire Hunt party traversed through the northern end of Star Valley in the latter part of 1811.¹

Hoback, Reznor, and Robinson, along with Joseph Miller, a member of Hunt's party, separated from the main group at Henry's Fort to do some trapping.

Robert Stuart, who also was a member of Hunt's Astorians, was commissioned in 1812 to take a message back to the company owners in New York. His course of travel was to follow the route they had used the previous year. Stuart's journey brought him into contact with the four trappers who had been left at Henry's Fort. They joined his company and the entire group apparently had little trouble till they entered what is now known as the Bear Lake Valley in southeastern Idaho. Here they were threatened by a band of Crow Indians. Immediately they turned from their planned course and went north-northeast. They entered Star Valley a short distance south of the present site of the community of Smoot, Wyoming.² Their route from here led them down the length of the Salt River to where it joins the Snake River. Thus they

¹Rollins, op. cit., p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 146.

traversed the full length of Star Valley in 1812. It was on the Snake River near the present site of Alpine that they were overtaken by the band of Crows. Although they were not molested personally, the Indians took all their horses and left them afoot in that rugged area.¹

Just how long it was after Stuart and his party had their unpleasant experience before other white men were traversing and working in Star Valley is difficult to determine. Some twenty-eight years later, however, we find:

Alonzo F. Brown of New Hampshire who crossed the route later known as the Lander Cut-off in 1840, told of coming upon the burning remnants of an immigrant train where the trail entered Star Valley. All members of the train except a four year old girl were dead. The stock had been driven off. The child's legs were broken, and apparently she had been left for dead. Brown's party dressed her wounds and took her to Oregon. Today a peaceful aspen grove marks the sight of the Massacre.²

Inasmuch as this party chose, however unfortunately, to use this route, chances are that others, prior to 1840, had done the same. There is considerable evidence to indicate that after 1840 many travelers used this trail. Velma Linford, discussing the fact that all the immigrants did not follow the same route, says:

¹Ibid., p. 133.

²Verna Bruce and Rosella Crook, "Smoot," Star Valley and Its Communities (a privately printed work compiled as an outcome of a class in School and Community Relations taught by Clarence D. Jayne, University of Wyoming Extension Division, 1951), p. 125.

At Pacific Springs, at the base of South Pass a trail later known as the Lander Cut-off left the old route, passing along the base of the Wind River mountains to Salt River and through Star Valley to Grey's Lake and Fort Hall.¹

As an outcome of the "Mormon War" in 1857-58 many of the Oregon immigrants desired to detour around the Mormon strongholds, and as a result the trail through the valley was improved.² Lavender points out that:

The Lander Cut-off was the popular route. Lying north of the Old Oregon Trail, this shorter but rougher road was built during the 'Mormon War' so that immigrants could avoid chance conflict with the angry saints in northern Utah.³

W. J. Ghent in his The Road to Oregon bears out Lavender's statement about the popularity of this route:

The Honey Lake Wagon Road was better known as the Lander Road, for the efficient and energetic Colonel Frederick W. Lander, at first its chief engineer and afterwards its superintendent. It was opened in time for the immigration of 1859, and Lander, in his report for that year, says that nine thousand immigrants had already made use of it.⁴ (*Italics mine.*)

Later in his discussion, Ghent throws light on another

¹Velma Linford, Wyoming, Frontier State (Denver, Colorado: The Old West Publishing Company, 1947), p. 138.

²Actually, there was no shooting war; but grossly exaggerated reports that the Mormons were plotting against the United States government had reached Washington, and President Buchanan and Secretary of War John Floyd had dispatched an army to Utah. Although there was no violence, westward travelers feared there might be at any time. For a full account the reader is referred to B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1930), V.

³Lavender, op. cit., p. 208.

⁴W. J. Ghent, The Road to Oregon (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1934), p. 138.

subject of interest. While it is popularly believed that the trail through Star Valley was used by people who sought to avoid the Mormons, it is somewhat ironic to learn that Mormons helped build the trail. Says Ghent:

Though projected partly to give the immigrants a passage remote from the Mormons, the ending of the trouble between the government and the church early in 1858 enabled Lander to draw upon President Young for large numbers of workmen, and the road was constructed mainly by Mormon labor.¹

The use of this trail, especially in the summer months when immigrants were most numerous, allowed thousands of people to see this beautiful spot. (See Fig. 2.) Undoubtedly many of these travelers found this valley an excellent resting place. Feed for their animals was abundant and game and fish were bountiful.

The immigrants found also in Star Valley a badly needed source of salt. On the west side of the valley was a natural formation of salt that merely had to be hacked loose and used. Enterprising merchants as well as immigrants made good use of this natural commodity.

Herdsmen from Bear Lake Valley, settled in the 1860's, must also have been at home in Star Valley early in its history. The Bear Lakers were quick to recognize that the neighboring valley was a good pasture for their livestock. Bessie Beachler observes:

Before 1886, many cattle were driven into the valley from Bear Lake and it was used as a summer range. The son

¹Ibid.

Yellowstone National Park

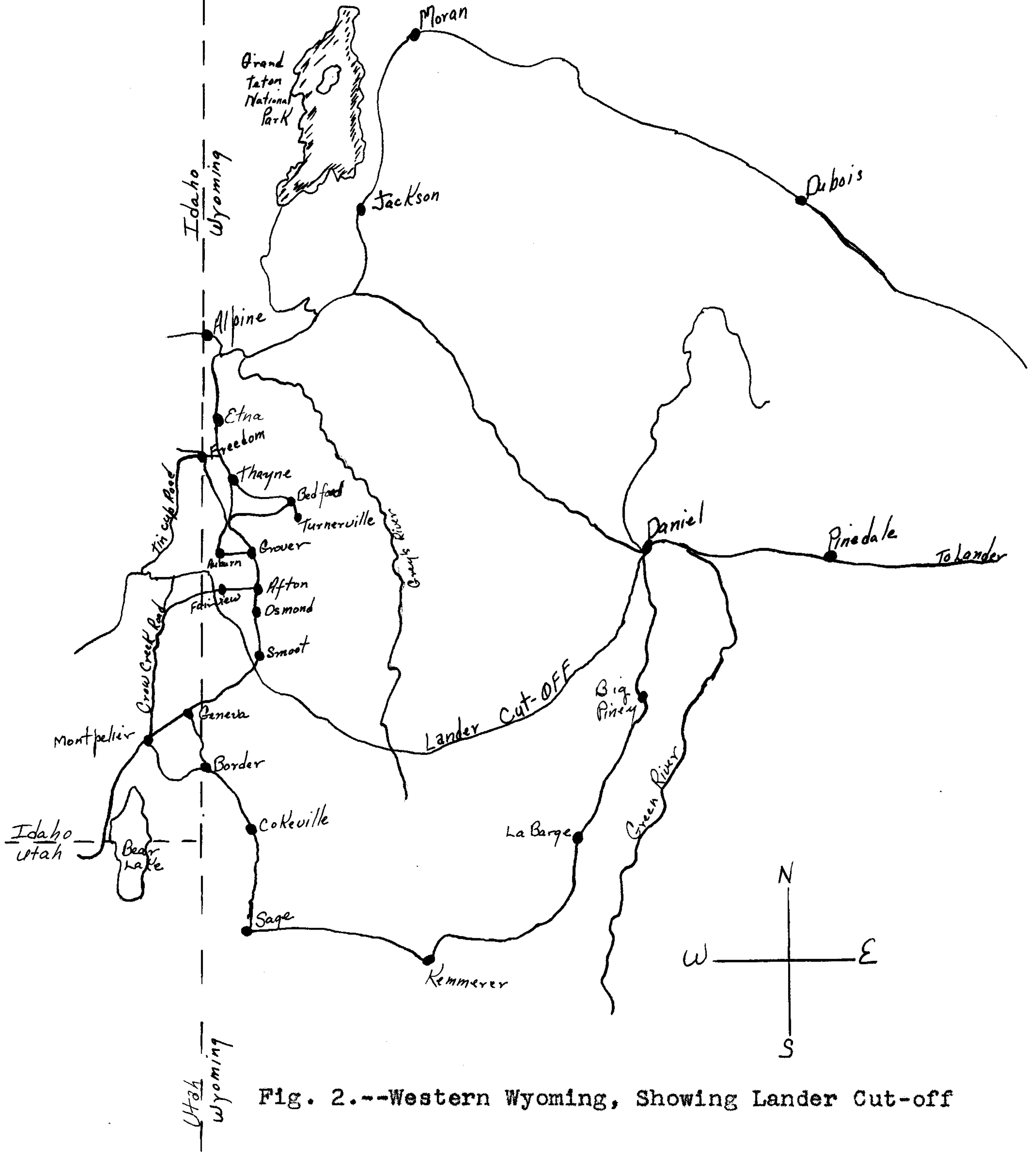


Fig. 2.--Western Wyoming, Showing Lander Cut-off

of William Budge of the Bear Lake Stake was in charge of the herd, and the Valley served as rich pasture land for thousands of cattle.¹

Thus we see that many years prior to the actual settlement of the valley it had been traversed by hundreds--according to Ghent,² thousands--of white people.

The valley is named

Early history refers to Star Valley as the Salt River Valley. Probably this resulted from the fact that early immigrants and trappers associated the river with the natural vein of salt located in the valley just west of the river. Some people, hearing the name, assumed that the river water was salty; but it is, of course, a clear water stream fed by many mountain streams and springs and has no source in a mineral or salt spring.

Others, inspired by the beauty of this mountain oasis, favored the spot with the name Paradise Valley. Arthur Jerome Dickson quotes the following from his father's daily diary on his journey from LaCross, Wisconsin, to Virginia City, Idaho. (The group used the Lander Cut-off.) The entry is dated August, 1864, and reads:

At last through the timber we caught a glimpse of a beautiful green valley watered by a clear mountain stream. As we drew out into the open and consulted our guide book we were not surprised to learn that we were in Paradise

¹Bessie Beachler, "Some Incidents in Star Valley History," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 2.

²Ghent, op. cit., p. 138.

Valley. We followed the stream in its downward course three or four miles and crossed near where a small creek flowed in from the west. Here we camped for the night. Along the creek I noticed that the ground was encrusted with a white substance which I at first mistook for alkali. Tasting it, I found it to be salt, apparently in the pure state. This was a welcome discovery and I gathered a heaping milk pan full to replenish our depleted stock. I also found the creek to be quite salty, although the larger stream bore no trace of it above here. We were still in Wyoming, but were gradually approaching the Idaho line. . . . We laid over a day in Paradise Valley, enjoying to the full the beauties of our surroundings. Game was not so scarce here as along the main trails. One of the men brought in an antelope and Lon got some sage chickens. Our last fresh meat, which we had purchased from the Mountain Men on the Sweetwater, had given out some days before. There were plenty of fish in the stream and wild fruits along the banks, including a few serviceberries that had not dried up yet.¹ (*Italics mine*)

Ghent, describing the Lander Trail, with obvious reference to Star Valley, speaks of Green Valley:

This trail ascended the Sweetwater to near its head, crossed the range by a gap considerably higher than South Pass, entered the Green Valley, crossed the river at the mouth of its East Fork and then struck across to the Snake, which it reached in the vicinity of Fort Hall. From there it followed the Oregon Trail.²

It was in 1880 that Moses Thatcher, an Apostle of the Mormon Church, visited the Saints in the area and declared that the name should be changed from the Salt River Valley to Star Valley, "because it is a star among valleys."³ From then on the upper valley was called Star Valley, but the lower

¹Arthur Jerome Dickson (ed.), Covered Wagon Days (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1929), p. 40.

²Ghent, op. cit., p. 138.

³Beachler, op. cit., p. 2.

valley continued to be known as the Lower Salt River Valley until improved roads and transportation made the two more united--probably 1892 when the Church organized the Star Valley Stake and included both areas.

CHAPTER III

REASONS FOR THE SETTLEMENT

The Church expands

Under the capable and inspired leadership of Brigham Young, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had begun to extend its mountain empire almost from the moment the first colonists had arrived in Salt Lake Valley. Indeed the colonization of the Great Basin was not left to chance. Leaders were called to that work by the authorities of the Church. They were carefully selected men to whom the founding of settlements was as much a call as if they had been called into the mission field to preach the Gospel.

In accordance with this systematic and well-organized plan of growth and expansion, the valleys of the mountain west began to fill up with Mormon pioneers. William E. Berrett points out, "Within twenty years of the founding of Salt Lake City (1847) nearly every present settlement of importance in the Great Basin was begun."¹ Although this did not hold true for Star Valley, the Church authorities must have known something of its potential as early as 1858 when Mormon laborers helped construct the Lander Cut-off which passed through upper

¹Berrett, op. cit., p. 286.

Star Valley.¹ A few years later President William Budge of the Bear Lake Stake summered thousands of Church cattle in the valley grasslands.² The Bear Lake people also made trips to the old salt works in the southwest end of the valley.³ It therefore seems safe to assume that the Church leaders were not unaware of the valley's possibilities. It must have been considered too remote for organized settlement at that early date.

Anti-polygamy legislation

If its remoteness discouraged earlier conquest, it is ironic to observe that that same quality is what actually attracted the first settlers some years later.

The Anti-Bigamy Law of 1862 outlawed the practice of polygamy in the nation but little was done about enforcing the law until the latter part of the 1870's. At that time such men as United States District Marshall Fred T. Dubois (whose jurisdiction was in Idaho) exerted much pressure to encourage prosecution of Mormon polygamists.⁴ Because of this pressure some of the Bear Lake Saints decided to leave the homes and farms they had hewn from the wilderness and seek an area less accessible to the law.

Star Valley was an ideal retreat for two reasons. It

¹Ghent, op. cit., p. 139. ²Beachler, op. cit., p. 2.

³Adelbert Wilde, et al., "M.I.A. Historical Pageant of Star Valley, Wyoming" (MS., 1915, in possession of this author), p. 4.

⁴James H. Hawley (ed.), History of Idaho (Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing Company, 1920), I, 198.

was indeed less accessible, and it was in the Territory of Wyoming beyond the jurisdiction of the avowed Mormon haters.

In June of 1879, polygamists from St. Charles, Bear Lake County, Idaho, came to the valley eager for the degree of safety proffered by Thomas Moonlight, the territorial governor of Wyoming, who welcomed the Mormons to his territory saying, "They are good colonizers, leave them alone."¹ Ole Jensen, an early resident of the valley, recorded in his diary concerning the attitude of the state officials:

I will here state that the Wyoming Government was favorable, and invited the Latter-day Saints to come here and settle. The Utah officers who had harassed the Mormons or polygamists, had offered their services to the Government of Wyoming to prosecute the Mormons, and a few of them came to this place to inquire after the polygamists but the Governor refused saying, 'No, thank you, if we wish to prosecute the Mormons, we have officers of our own.'²

Thus religious refugees were some of the first to come to Star Valley with the idea of making it a home.

In 1885 the Idaho Territorial Legislature gave even greater impetus to the settlement of the Wyoming valley when they passed Section 571 of the Revised Statutes of Idaho (Election Law) commonly called "The Idaho Test Oath." It reads as follows:

You do solemnly swear (or affirm) that you are a male citizen of the United States, over twenty-one years; that you have actually resided in this Territory for four months

¹"Thomas Moonlight, Governor of Wyoming," The National Encyclopedia of American Biography (New York: James T. White and Company, 1904), XII.

²"Ole Jensen Diary" (MS., 1879, in possession of Molly Smith, Afton, Wyoming), no page numbers given.

last past, and in this county thirty days; that you are not a bigamist or a polygamist; that you are not a member of any order, sect, organization, or association which teaches, advises, counsels or encourages its members, devotees or any other person to commit the crime of bigamy, or polygamy or any other crime defined by law, as a duty rising or resulting from membership in such order, organization or association, or which practices bigamy or polygamy, or celestial marriage as a doctrinal rite of such organization; that you do not either publicly or privately, or in any other manner whatever, teach, advise, counsel or encourage any person to commit the crime of bigamy, polygamy or any other crime defined by law, either as a religious duty or otherwise; that you regard the Constitution of the United States and the laws thereof, and of this Territory, as interpreted by the courts as the supreme laws of the land, the teachings of any order, organization, or association to the contrary notwithstanding, and that you have not voted previously, so help you God.¹

According to James H. Hawley there were 25,000 Mormons in Idaho in 1885.² Only a fraction of them were living in polygamy; nonetheless, the Test Oath deprived them of their governmental rights and gave cause for District U. S. Marshall Dubois and his deputies to openly and severely harass the Idaho polygamists. In 1884 the railroad was completed to Montpelier. This made the officers' job easier and the polygamists' position even more precarious. At this time more Bear Lake families joined their neighbors who had previously established homes in Star Valley. Even there, the marshalls, spurred on by the fact that their salaries were boosted by bounty-like bonuses for each arrest, tried to lure them into Idaho and occasionally invaded them in their Wyoming homes, driving them into temporary exile in the nearby mountains.³

¹Idaho, Revised Statutes (1885), sec. 571.

²Hawley, op. cit., I, 198.

³Interview with Albert Kennington, December 28, 1961.

In Utah as well as Idaho, polygamists were forced to flee law enforcement officers to avoid prison. They would hide by day and transact their business by night. This was known as going "underground."¹ Soon weary of such living, many fled to Canada and Mexico. Others heeded advice given publicly by Moses Thatcher in Logan, Utah, to seek refuge in Star Valley.²

Other reasons

Despite the fact that harsh laws and an even harsher Idaho interpretation of the law drove many people from their homes, and the nucleus of the valley's population came from the Bear Lake settlements, this author does not wish to imply that Star Valley was settled only because of governmental pressures. Along with the polygamists came many who did not practice plural marriage. Such communities as Bedford and Turnerville were made up of monogamist Mormons chiefly of German-Swiss extraction who found there an environment similar to their homeland. Names such as Heiner, Fluckiger, Neuenschwander and Rickenbaugh are still common to this area.³

Other early colonists were also attracted rather than driven to the valley. Many young men--bachelors, chiefly

¹Berrett, op. cit., p. 287.

²Lenore S. Fluckiger, "History of Bedford and Turnerville," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 75.

³Ibid.

Latter-day Saints, were seeking homesteads, as pointed out by Leora Rich.¹ Such advertisements as the following influenced many to seek their fortune in the mountains. Bearing the caption "The Salt River Valley" and dated September, 1880, the following article appeared in the Logan Leader and also in the Deseret Evening News of September 21, 1880:

The accounts of this valley given by members of the exploring party consisting of President William B. Preston, Apostle Moses Thatcher, and others, who lately visited it, are quite glowing. The valley is about four to six miles wide by twenty-one long, and in general contour strongly resembles Cache Valley. One of the party remarked that the same Architect who planned Cache Valley also constructed Salt River Valley, and that the latter was an improvement on the former. It is quite as well watered on the east side and better on the west side than Cache Valley. Timber is abundant and convenient, and thousands of tons of hay may be cut on the open prairies. Wild currants, gooseberries and strawberries abound, the two latter fruits being of excellent quality. The present population consists of seven families whom the brethren organized by setting apart one of their number, a high priest, to preside. The residents say there has been frost every month this year, yet it does not appear to be much colder there than here, for the same may be said of Cache Valley this year. Stock wintered much better in Salt River Valley last winter than they did in this, and on the whole there seems to be but little difference in the climate of the two valleys. With abundant water, grass and timber and an extremely fertile soil, Salt River Valley offers many inducements to settlers, and will no doubt be teeming with an industrious and prosperous population within the next few years. On the east side of the valley, and near the bank of a stream that much resembles the Logan River, a townsite, situated upon a level gravelly bench, was fixed upon for a settlement.²

No doubt the article gave much more glowing account of

¹Leora Rich, "History of Fairview" (MS. in possession of Molly Smith, Afton, Wyoming), p. 1.

²The Deseret Evening News (Salt Lake City), September 21, 1880, p. 545, quoted from the Logan Leader, September, 1880.

conditions than they actually were, but it certainly must have had a strong influence in drawing energetic young men to the valley. With regard to the above news caption J. L. Hepworth records in his journal:

The first to arrive were James Jensen, Jr. and Hans Nelson, single boys, aged twenty-one.

Inspired by an article in the Logan Leader about Star Valley, and encouraged by an Implement Company [sic] to get their equipment into a new territory, the two young men outfitted themselves with a new Shurttler wagon and loaded it with machinery and headed for Star Valley.¹

More will be told of these young men in a later chapter. It is sufficient here to say that they were representative of the many young men filled with the spirit of adventure and colonization who made their contribution in the "star of all valleys."²

¹J. L. Hepworth, "History of Grover" (MS., 1961, in possession of the author, Rexburg, Idaho), p. 1.

²Beachler, op. cit., p. 2.

CHAPTER IV

SETTLEMENT OF THE UPPER VALLEY

Selection of the valley

When Moses Thatcher, accompanied by William B. Preston, Presiding Bishop of the Church, visited the Upper Salt River Valley in the fall of 1877, both men were highly pleased with its appearance. It is interesting to note that an Indian called "Indian John" is reported to have acted as a guide for these two men on this occasion. The Indians used the area as a summer hunting and campground, and Thatcher and Preston found a large number of Shoshone Indian wickiups built of willows.¹ However, they did not see any Indians.

The "Star Valley Stake Record," kept by the L.D.S. Church, contains an account of the settlement of the valley, and tells that these two men came into the valley by way of the Bear Lake settlements. When they arrived they found neither trapper nor explorer.² Only a year after they left this valley that had made such a favorable impression upon them, the Church began actively to sponsor its settlement.

¹"Star Valley Stake Record" (M.S., 1863-- , on file at the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah; no page numbers are given but it is arranged chronologically by year).

²Ibid., 1877.

In August of 1878, Moses Thatcher and William B. Preston again visited the Salt River Valley; this time Brigham Young, Jr., and his wife Kate were with them. They stopped their teams on the west bank of the Salt River at a point about five miles northwest of the present site of Afton, Wyoming. These four held services; and Brigham Young, Jr., who was an Apostle in the Mormon Church, dedicated the valley by prayer as a gathering place for the Saints. The company had arrived in the valley in the morning of the day on which they held their dedicatory meeting, which was August 29, 1878. They had come into the valley from Bear Lake by way of Crow Creek and immediately after the meeting they left by way of Stump Creek to Soda Springs, Idaho. They believed the valley to have been totally uninhabited, but as will be discussed later in this chapter, at least two cabins had already been constructed by trappers.¹

At a meeting held May 7, 1879, at the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Charles C. Rich of the Bear Lake settlement, an experienced colonizer, and Moses Thatcher were appointed to supervise the settling of Star Valley by the Saints who might wish to locate there. This, of course, made Star Valley part of the Bear Lake Stake.²

The first people to seek permanent homes in the valley came into the upper valley and after they had examined it, they then moved on into the lower valley in June, 1879.

¹Ibid., 1878.

²Ibid., 1879.

Auburn

In August of 1879 a small colony established themselves on the west side of the upper valley near Stump Creek. They entered the valley from Stump Creek Canyon, which had a better road bed but which was not conveniently reached from Bear Lake or the Utah settlements.¹ Nonetheless, these early colonists were from Bear Lake and had evidently taken a circuitous route into Star Valley.² In this colony were James and Sam Sibbets and families, Jacob Grover, Harmon Lehmborg, David Robinson, Ben and Money Welch and some trappers who soon moved away.³ They settled at a point about one and one-half miles south of where the village of Auburn now stands, on the west side of the Salt River. They all settled close together, and three families spent the winter of 1879-80 in cabins built in the fall of 1879.

Joseph Welch, son of Ben and Money Welch, makes a statement to the effect that his father trapped in Star Valley for several years prior to settling there in 1879.⁴ Other testimonies give us to understand that August Lehmborg also was a trapper in this area during the 1870's.⁵ Joseph Welch

¹Maud Call Burton, "Pioneering Star Valley" (MS. written for the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Afton, Wyoming, February, 1946, in possession of this author).

²"Star Valley Stake Record," 1879.

³Burton, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴Testimony of Joseph Welch as given to Janice Reeves, Smoot, Wyoming, 1958.

⁵Lorean Gardner, Chloteal Griffith, and Vilate Anderson, "History of Auburn," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 62.

states that his father and August Lehmborg built a rock house as well as a log cabin during their trapping period, and it was in or near these that the first Mormon settlers spent the winter of 1879-80.¹ That winter was more severe than these early pioneers had expected and as a consequence they suffered a great deal. Many of their cattle died, and to save themselves from perishing they had to snowshoe the fifty miles to Montpelier and carry what food they could back with them on their backs.²

In 1880 a few other families came into the valley. Among these was Charles D. Cazier. He started to build a house where the community of Grover now is but soon moved across the river and located with the few other families near Auburn.

Afton townsite chosen

That same fall Elders Charles C. Rich, Moses Thatcher, and William B. Preston, as well as President William Budge, George Osmond and others, visited the valley and held meetings with the Saints there. On this occasion (September 3, 1880) Charles Drake Cazier was set apart to preside over the branch of the Church then organized. Elder Thatcher then advised the settlers to locate on Swift Creek (the present site of Afton), and directed Cazier to have a townsite surveyed there,

¹An interview with Joseph Welch by Janice Reeves, Smoot, Wyoming, summer, 1958.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 2.

to contain thirty blocks of ten acres each. On that occasion Elder Thatcher remarked that the elevated bench at the mouth of Swift Creek Canyon would be a beautiful location for a temple. It was on this visit also that Elder Thatcher named the valley Star Valley,¹ and President William Budge of Bear Lake Stake, a native of Scotland, suggested "Afton" (as the name of the townsite) ". . . because the roaring, tumbling stream gushing out of the mountains was the very antithesis of the placid stream he remembered of sweet Afton fame."²

Soon after Cazier's appointment to preside over the affairs of the Church, meetings were commenced in private houses, and they were continued during the winter of 1880-81. Some of the Saints who lived at a distance made their way to the place of worship on snowshoes. About nine families spent the winter in the valley in the area now included in the Auburn Ward, west of the Salt River. Evidently the people were better fitted for this winter for no mention is made of excessive hardships.

A discouraging outlook

In the spring of 1881, a number of other families arrived in Star Valley with the intention of making homes there, but they left again soon afterwards apparently discouraged by

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1880.

²Allie Hyde, Clarissa Merritt, and Estella Gardner, "Afton," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 43.

the reports given them by the families then living there.¹ Not only did those families that came for settlement in 1881 leave, but some of those that had spent the previous winter there left also. They believed that it was too cold for raising grain and did not feel inclined to take the advice of Cazier who, agreeable to the counsel given the settlers the previous year by Elder Thatcher, suggested that the present site of Afton be chosen as the place of settlement. Elder Cazier, discouraged because of the lack of support of the people (they would not consent to move to the specified location on the east side of the Salt River), was honorably released by Elder Charles C. Rich from the presidency of the branch of the Church in Star Valley. He then removed to Bennington, Bear Lake County, Idaho, where he resided until 1885 when he returned to try again.²

August Lehmborg, who had settled with this group in 1880, and Ben Welch and sons were the only settlers who remained, and had it not been for these two families, upper Star Valley would have been left without inhabitants for two winters, namely, 1881-82 and 1882-83. It was June, 1883, before Moroni Hunt, who had lived in the lower valley, and John Wilkes built two log cabins on the east side of the river about one mile west of the present site of Afton. G. M. Hunt came a little later and built a third cabin nearby. These three men spent the winter of 1883-84 there and were thus the

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1881. ²Ibid.

first settlers in the district now included in the Afton Wards. They did not remain permanently, however. One Star Valley winter was enough.

Maud Call Burton explains:

The winter of 1883-84 was very severe. When spring came the animals were very weak. The first shoots of green grass weakened them instead of giving strength, and then one day the remaining horses drank a mixture of clay white-wash prepared to put on the cabins to better their appearance. All the animals died but one horse. This was the spring of 1884. The snow was gone. No more skiing. What next? John Wilkes rode the remaining horse to St. Charles, his home town in Bear Lake Valley, for help; for their resources were all exhausted. Friends came to their rescue and fitted up teams and wagons with which the settlers were returned to Bear Lake. Thus ended this colony.¹

And so during the winter of 1884-85 there were again no settlers on the east side of the river. Resolutely, however, the Lehmbergs and Welchs hung on and remained in their cabins on the present site of Auburn. In 1884 Grant Campbell joined them, having come to the valley via Stump Creek Canyon. He remained with them during the ensuing winter following which he moved seven miles to the south and settled on Crow Creek.

Fairview

The spring and summer of 1885 found several families moving into various locations around the valley and settling. George Campbell, Marriott Wells, Fred Brown, Sr., and James Dinsdale joined Grant Campbell on Crow Creek in the area where Fairview now stands.²

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 2.

²"Star Valley Stake Record," 1885.

Grover

As previously mentioned, two young men, James Jensen, Jr., and Hans Nelson, having read the glowing account in the Logan Leader, came to Star Valley in July, 1885. J. L.

Hepworth records:

When they arrived at the mouth of Crow Creek and looked over the valley they fell in love with the tall grass waving in the July wind. That was July 22, 1885. There were only a few scattered homes in the valley then. They camped for two days on the south side of Swift Creek, just northwest of the present site of Afton. The first day they rode up toward Smoot to explore the valley seeking a suitable place to settle.

July 24, they turned north toward the Narrows and circled around along the east foot hills. Here the soil was soft and rich, reaching to their horses ankles. Stretching around were acres of sage brush, bunch grass and dock weeds. They were also impressed, they later said, with cool mountain streams and the canyons filled with good timber. So on July 24, 1885 they staked out their claims at the mouth of two canyons, Grover and Jensen.¹

Later that same year, in October, John C. Phillips and his family arrived in Star Valley and settled near these two young men. Also the brother of James Jensen, Jr., Joseph Jensen, came and settled with his brother. This was the beginning of the settlement of the community later called Grover.²

The call for colonists

This high mountain valley was slow to fill up after the Church leaders dedicated it for settlement. One would wonder if Charles C. Rich and Moses Thatcher did not have some misgivings about their job of supervising its settlement inasmuch as many of those people who had come there between 1880 and

¹Hepworth, op. cit., p. 1.

²Ibid.

1883 had left, apparently discouraged. Moses Thatcher, still convinced that the project was a good one, wrote the following article which appeared in the Deseret Evening News of May 2, 1885:

A number of people having made inquiries in relation to facilities of Star Valley--formerly known as Salt River Valley--in Wyoming, the following is submitted for the consideration of all interested:

The valley lies forty miles northeast from Montpelier in Bear Lake county, is easily accessible, about twenty-five miles long, from three to five wide, well watered, having Stump Creek, Crow Creek and Afton as feeders to the main, Salt River. The soil is excellent, much of it producing blue grass, and the cost for conducting water from the streams onto the land would be much less than elsewhere in our mountains. The hills which are extensive on the west afford excellent grazing. Timber is abundant, of easy access and good quality. Fish and game in the season thereof abound. . . . The valley and surroundings present the most lively scenery in the mountains. Altitude about six thousand feet. Winters correspondingly cold, but not windy, the valley being well protected by surrounding hills and mountains. Salt River flows into the Snake River after passing through another valley of equal extent as the one named and probably in every way as desirable. Communication by good wagon road at slight cost can be had in that direction winter and summer with the Snake River Settlements. Star Valley was visited and dedicated to the settlement of the saints in 1878, by Elder Brigham Young, Jr., Moses Thatcher, and William B. Preston, and was subsequently visited by Elders Charles C. Rich, Thatcher and Preston in 1881, when a number of families located there. At the time the name was changed to Star Valley by a vote of those present. No more desirable location for happy and prosperous homes can be found in these mountains than in that lovely valley. It is open for settlement.¹

The foregoing letter, published in the official organ of the Church, seemed to direct the attention of many home seekers to Star Valley, and the year 1885 witnessed the actual settlement of both valleys--Star Valley proper and lower Star

¹Deseret Evening News, May 2, 1885, p. 275.

Valley. Among those who arrived in the valley in 1885 were a number of brethren and their families who fled from Utah because of the anti-polygamy crusade which was going on at that time.¹

Still another article, which might well have been written by a present-day Chamber of Commerce, appeared in the Deseret Evening News of July 29, 1885, and must have encouraged other people, seeking fertile virgin soil, to pack their goods and head for Star Valley. The author of the article, who remains anonymous, says:

From a gentleman just down from the north we learn some particulars of a very interesting valley located in Wyoming, forty miles northeast of Montpelier, Bear Lake Valley, which bears the title of Star Valley. . . . It is said to be 240 feet lower than Bear Lake, and one of the best watered valleys to be found in this mountainous region. There are five large mountain streams entering the valley from various directions, any one of which is large enough to irrigate the whole of it, and the land is situated so favorably for being irrigated that our informant declares that two men with teams could make a ditch in one week and bring out water sufficient to irrigate thousands of acres. The land slopes beautifully from the east and west down to the river, which is near the center of the valley, and the soil is of a light gravelly nature, of a reddish appearance, well adapted for the raising of lucern--in fact, for almost any kind of crops raised throughout northern Utah. When our informant was there the present month he saw rye growing fully six feet in height and beets, turnips, cabbage, beans and other garden products that were not at all injured by the frost, proving clearly that the locality is much more favorable for the cultivation of these things than Bear Lake and other of our higher valleys which are inhabited.

Along the east side of the valley a chain of very high and steep mountains extend, and, jutting out from these, but disconnected from them may be seen a series of hills pyramidal in shape and separate from one another like a

¹Interview with Thomas F. Burton, Ogden, Utah, March 22, 1961.

row of sentinels overlooking the valley. Between and back of these are extensive forests of pine timber . . . and of easy access; in fact a wagon can be driven right into it.

On the west side of the valley there are low rolling hills, furnishing an excellent range; indeed the whole of the surrounding country is well adapted for summer grazing, and horses might winter there as it is the natural wintering place for deer and elk, but the snow falls rather too deep to make it safe to depend upon stock getting their own living during the whole year.

The whole of the west side of this valley is covered with a fine bunch grass, and presents the appearance of one vast meadow. It is easily broken up, there being no brush growing upon it. A considerable quantity of fine blue grass is also found in the vicinity of the streams which makes excellent hay.

This valley is capable of sustaining more inhabitants than Bear Lake Valley; in fact, there are ample facilities for making twelve settlements. One townsite, situated at the mouth of what is known as Swift Creek, was laid off by Apostle Moses Thatcher some years ago and given the name of Afton. There are at present only six families in the valley, but many people from Bear Lake and other valleys in the north expect to go there to settle right away, and we would recommend the locality to the consideration of a large class in this region who are desirous of following agricultural life, as offering about the best facilities of any place we know of for new settlers. Its isolation is the only thing that has prevented it being fully occupied.

Twelve miles farther down the river than this valley is another and smaller one known as the Lower Salt River Valley, where there are a few inhabitants and where our informant found new potatoes, home-raised, being served up on the 4th of July.

Access to the valley may be had from several directions--by way of Snake River Valley, or Soda Springs, or up Montpelier Canyon, or by a canyon which opens into Bear Lake Valley a short distance south of Montpelier. This latter is probably the best as well as the shortest way¹ for any one to take who is going there from this region.¹

Afton is settled

Despite the fact that the author of the foregoing article may have been a little too extravagant and optimistic in his evaluation of the valley's potential, the tide of

¹Deseret Evening News, July 29, 1885, p. 449.

colonists soon started. Harvey Dixon and his family arrived on the scene August 10, 1885, accompanied by Henry Martin Harmon, who soon afterward brought in his family. They located on the present site of Afton. On their arrival on Swift Creek they found the cabins which had been built and abandoned two years previously by the Hunts and John Wilkes. These they immediately put to good use. Other settlers who came to the valley in 1885 were Aroiet Lucious Hale, Jr., Arthur Benjamin Clark and family, George Sant and family, Charles Green, John Hurd and family, Orson Hyde Eggleston, John Cornelius Stevens, and others.¹

In the meantime, Charles D. Cazier was called by President William Budge of the Bear Lake Stake to return to Star Valley to preside over the Saints there. Carrying with him letters of instruction to this effect he arrived in October, 1885. Soon after his arrival he called a meeting of the Saints who had located in different parts of the valley, at which meeting he was accepted by unanimous vote of all present as their presiding elder. This meeting was held on Sunday, December 6, 1885.

In the fall of 1885 the townsite of Afton was surveyed by the settlers themselves. The surveying was done by using a common carpenter's square and a rope.²

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1885.

²Hyde, op. cit., p. 42.

By 1891 Afton had a pioneer meeting house, two small stores, a furniture and hardware store, and a number of frame houses.¹

Osmond

Samuel Henderson also came to Star Valley in 1885 and settled at Afton but only remained there during the winter of 1885-86. The next fall he moved a few miles south to the present site of Osmond and established a home on Dry Creek. Here he took up land and became the first permanent settler in the community now known as Osmond--so named in honor of George Osmond, the first Stake President in Star Valley.

Other families came in the next year or two and settled near the homestead of Henderson. Names such as Nephi Hill, Steve Kender, Floyd and Dave Keger, Charlie Viegel, John Stump and others are closely linked with the development of this farming community.²

Smoot

In the south end of Star Valley and adjacent to the Lander Cut-off Trail which went through the valley, William

¹"Afton Ward Records" (MS., 1885--, on file at the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah; no page numbers are given but it is arranged chronologically by year).

²Merettie Leavitt, "History of Osmond," Star Valley and Its Communities, pp. 117-118.

Parsons settled in 1886 and began farming.¹ The next two years witnessed several families settling the area. These settlers called this vicinity Cottonwood. Parsons was made Bishop of the Cottonwood Ward when it was organized in 1889. Later, however, its name was changed to Belview and still later it was changed to Smoot in honor of Reed Smoot, an Apostle in the Mormon Church.²

¹Bruce, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE COLONIZATION OF THE LOWER STAR VALLEY

Freedom

Upper Star Valley was settled more quickly than the lower part, but the latter can lay claim to having the first permanent settlers there. The "Star Valley Stake Record" reads:

The first settlers in Salt River Valley were William Heap (then of St. Charles, Bear Lake County, Idaho), John S. Rolph and his sons, and John Hill and Moroni Hunt with their families, who arrived on the present site of Freedom in May, 1879. They went to work immediately and put up four log cabins on the south side of Tin Cup Creek thus named from the simple fact that a company of mining prospectors had lost a tin cup while camping on the stream some time previous. The first location was in Idaho about a mile northwest of the present townsite of Freedom and these first settlers came by way of Montpelier over the Mountains to Star Valley and had to make the first road down Crow Creek for a distance of about fifteen miles.¹

An account by Maud Burton of this little colony in the winter of 1879-1880 certainly shows the extreme hardships and trials that plagued these hardy pioneers:

It was a hazardous undertaking in the spring of 1879 when some young, restless sons of Utah Pioneers heard of the isolated valley niche in the mountains and decided to make it their home. A company including John S. Rolph, William Heap, John Hill, Frank Cross, Moroni Hunt, Gash Hunt, and John Wilkes, after looking the Upper Valley over, located in the Lower Valley. . . . They, some of the men, then returned to Bear Lake Valley and got their wives

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1880.

and children. This was a trip of seventy-five miles and return, with little or no roads for about one half the distance. They brought eight wagons with them, and the trip returning required over three weeks. Some days they travelled only a mile or two and their last camp was still in sight. The Montpelier Creek had to be forded twenty-six times in a distance of six miles. Often furrows had to be plowed on the side hills for the upper wheels, to keep them from tipping over with their loads of household furnishings and supplies of food. They arrived safely, however, back to their cabins, and the little colony now numbered twenty-seven souls.

The winter of 1879-80 was serious for these inexperienced settlers. In the fall it was imperative that they secure supplies from outside the valley for their needs during the winter months. Accordingly they secured provisions from Montpelier and on their way home were overtaken by a heavy snow storm, compelling them to cache most of their provisions in Beaver Canyon about mid-way between the valley and Montpelier, and it was with great difficulty they made their way back to their cabins, with a small portion of the supplies. Their plight was serious. The snow being too deep for the teams to make their way through it the only alternative was to make skis or snow shoes and carry the cached supplies home on their backs; otherwise they faced starvation. Many of their cattle and horses died from starvation due to the early snows.¹

Vernessa Wright speaking of the same colony and their hardships says:

Almost all of the livestock perished of cold and starvation; while the colonists themselves suffered extremely from cold and isolation. Their supplies were all snowed in at what is now known as Beaver Canyon between Montpelier and Afton. So trips on snowshoes to Montpelier and Beaver Canyon were made by Albert Rolph and John Hill. Trips were also made on snowshoes to Caribou where a gold mine was in operation. Albert Rolph, Jay Rolph, and William Heap are credited with making four trips to Beaver Canyon and one to Montpelier for flour.

These courageous, hardy men covered a distance of seventy-six to one hundred and fifty miles and brought seventy-five to one hundred pounds of flour and other provisions in each trip. The cattle that survived the winter were driven to the creek bottoms to feed on the willows. The snow was said to be eight feet deep on the level.

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 4.

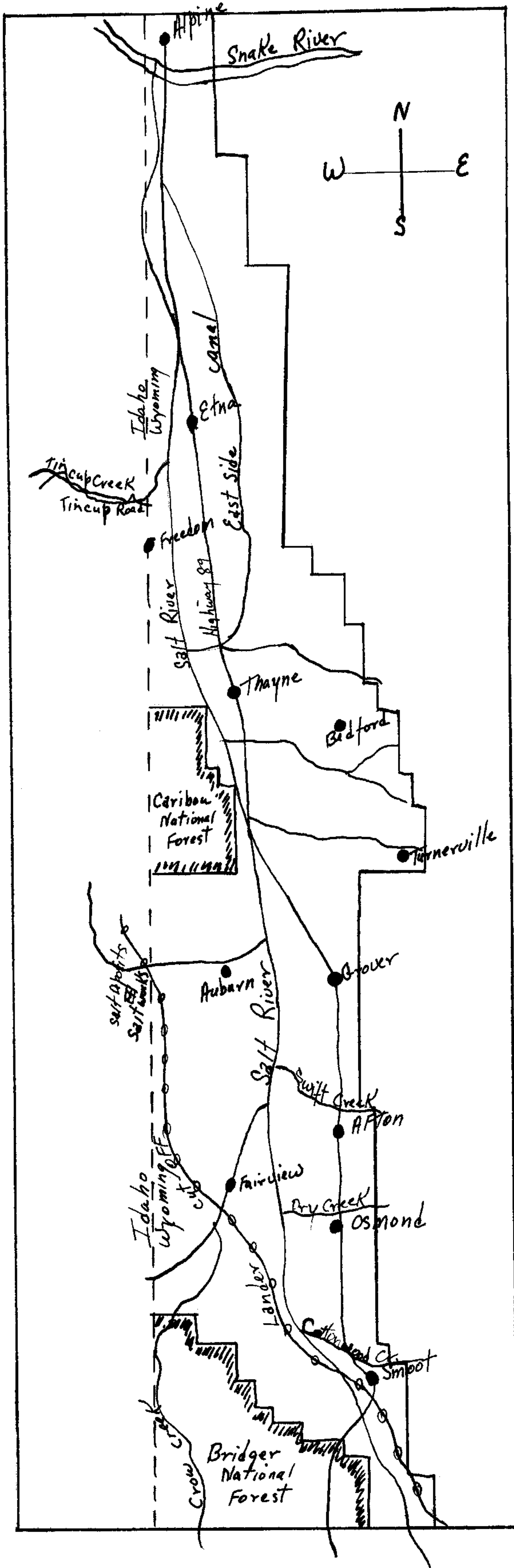


Fig. 3
Star Valley

In February of 1880, Sarah Ann Heap gave birth to a baby boy. Mrs. Martha A. Rolph, the mother of Sarah Ann Heap, attended at the childbirth.¹

According to the account of Elizabeth Arnold Stone, speaking of this first colony to settle in Freedom, ". . . they lived for five weeks on beaver meat and muskrats."² Indeed their lives were fraught with vicissitudes, but the small colony remained intact and flourished after their first winter.

Among this group were some polygamists and inasmuch as they then were living in Idaho, the Idaho marshalls began to seek them out. However, safety was near at hand for these people who had merely to cross the nearby border into Wyoming to be beyond their grasp. In regard to this subject, Velma Linford says, ". . . They explored the valley and settled on the border of Idaho and Wyoming. The town was named 'Freedom' because a fugitive could move across the border of either state and gain his freedom."³

Etna

As discussed in the preceding chapter, Star Valley began to fill up rapidly after 1885. The Lower Salt River Valley attracted many hardy souls who were not afraid to be long distances away from their former homes and friends. Such

¹Vernessa Wright, "Freedom," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 109.

²Elizabeth Arnold Stone, Uinta County--Its Place in History (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company [n.d.]), p. 251.

³Linford, op. cit., p. 138.

families as the Lovells, Morgans, Moors, Bakers, Wolfleys, and Radfords had traveled the length of the Salt River and settled some seven miles north of Freedom near the river where it empties into the Snake River. This was in 1888.¹ As early as 1879, George Heap, an early trapper, had built his cabin where these early pioneers settled. Also in the same year as Heap had built his cabin, there had been a cabin erected in the vicinity by men who had been in the nearby hills cutting ties.² The colony created by the above-mentioned pioneers was named Etna at the suggestion of Carl Cook, one of the early pioneers.³

Thayne

Many of the communities in the lower valley had their beginnings concurrently. Unlike the hardy souls that took up land in Etna, others chose not to go the full length of the valley and settled fifteen miles south, in the south end of the lower valley in what was known as Glencoe--now Thayne. The name Glencoe was given by two Scottish families, the McFarlanes and the Baxters, in memory of their native land. In 1891, however, when a United States government post office was established, it was discovered that there was already a Glencoe, Wyoming; hence a new name had to be selected. Therefore, mail delivery had been somewhat haphazard, but Henry Thayne had volunteered his home as a point of distribution.

¹Hilda C. White, "Etna," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 79.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 83.

Consequently, when the official post office was established on May 8, 1891, it was called Thayne. The Church still designated the community as the Glencoe Ward and did not change it on the Church records until the early 1900's.¹ The first permanent settlers on this townsite were Hyrum Vail and his family along with the McFarlane and Baxter families who took up land and built homes in 1887. By 1889 there were fourteen families there.²

Bedford

Bedford, situated in the southeast section of Lower Star Valley, first came to the attention of homesteaders in 1888. The Latter-day Saint Church had several herds of tithing cattle and many of them were brought to the area that is now Bedford to graze.³ William B. Preston, who was at that time presiding bishop of the Church, came to the valley to see how the cattle were thriving. He liked the location so well that he named it Bedford in memory of his old hometown in Bedford, Virginia. He immediately thereafter brought several of his relatives into this virgin area and had them homestead the

¹Ethel Miller, "Thayne," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 128.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches, as one of its principles, that members should annually pay tithing--or 10 per cent of their annual increase. This was often paid in kind instead of cash, hence the Church owned large herds.

land. This land, known as the Preston estate, comprised about a thousand acres consisting of the area included in the present townsite.¹

Prior to Bishop Preston's activities, however, a Dr. Ormsby of Logan in the spring of 1888 had a cabin built near the present site of Bedford. The following year Ben Ramsell brought in a herd of cattle and a band of horses for Dr. Ormsby. Ramsell, Richard Hinck and Henry McCulloch, who were herding cattle, and John B. Thatcher, Jr., began homesteading some tracts of land in the area. Ramsell hired John Fluckiger from Logan, Utah, to come up and build him a log cabin. Fluckiger, too, liked the area and homesteaded a tract of land.² Soon thereafter such groups as the Neuenschwanders, Heiners, Rickenbachs--all converts to the Church from Germany and Switzerland--settled there.

Turnerville

Southeast of the community of Bedford, William A. Turner settled in the year 1890. He had come there from West Jordan, Utah, in the month of September and had brought a year's supply of food with him. Not knowing the condition of snowslides in the nearby mountains, he built his cabin in the center of a small valley. The next spring, however, he chose a site for a home at the mouth of Willow Creek. Other families, mostly Turners and Merritts, moved into the nearby area.³ This settlement later became known as Turnerville.

¹Fluckiger, op. cit., p. 74. ²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 77.

CHAPTER VI

PIONEERING

The early years that the people spent in the valley were fraught with hardships and called for ingenuity and perseverance on the part of both men and women. They were filled with interesting experiences typical of the average family.

The hard winter

Perhaps several factors made the winter of 1889-90 a hard one for those early settlers. Glowing newspaper accounts of the valley and of the reasonably mild winter climate no doubt misled some people.¹ The winter of 1888-89 was very mild and left a false impression. Beachler points out in her account:

It was this mild winter that later caused the settlers great distress. Not more than a foot of snow fell and cattle and horses found plenty of forage in the open fields. The pioneers thought they had come to a region with a very mild climate.

Many new settlers had arrived to enter homesteads and although the fields were waist high with wild hay, the people did not think it necessary to cut and preserve it for winter feeding. The early snows of the winter of 1889-90 caught these pioneer folk completely unprepared.

The snow fell to a depth of from three and a half to four feet on the level valley bottom. It is said that it snowed and melted again and again until all together eighteen feet of snow fell that winter.²

¹The Deseret Evening News, July 29, 1885.

²Beachler, op. cit., p. 8.

Suffice it to say that hardships set in immediately for many of the Saints with the onslaught of this winter. Cattle began to suffer and die. Mrs. Burton, telling of the starving cattle, says:

Previous to this winters coming, the people trusted too much to having an open winter. The summer had been less productive than those preceding it. The snow fell to a great depth. . . . People emptied the hay from their bed ticks and even took the straw from under their carpets to save their last cow. Some drove their animals to the mountain ridges; many of these lived. Others tried to do this with their animals but had left it until the animals were too weak. They then took sacks, climbed the mountain slopes and ridges, pulled the dried grass, filled the sacks and rolled them down to their starving animals. In this way Ben and Morris Hale saved their mother's last cow. After thus feeding the cow, they milked her in a bottle which they carried in their pockets, taking it home to their baby sister, Louie. Many others likewise saved one or two of their choicest cows.¹

Great losses were sustained by these people with their cattle, but losing cows was not the only concern for these hard-pressed pioneers. Maud Burton says, "Many of the families fared little better than did the animals. Food supplies were scarce. Of luxuries, there were none."² She continues:

Conditions became critical towards spring. The men organized and appointed Lu Hale to take charge, and started out to open the road to Montpelier. This meant much wallowing, tramping and shovelling of snow, so that the underfed teams could be saved for that part of the work they alone could do. Still many of the teams became exhausted when within fourteen miles of Montpelier. The men, too, were nearing the end of their strength, and it seemed they could not make it through, but a happy surprise awaited them; a crew from Montpelier had been working from their end of the road and the two crews met in Snow Slide Canyon, much to the relief of all. . . . The next morning a sleigh box full of accumulated mail was enroute to the

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 24.

²Ibid.

valley, while the other teams loaded up with merchandise and various supplies. These supplies gave needed items for the people until after the spring breakup of mountain roads, which was always a serious period to pass through.¹

The Indian scare of 1895

Star Valley settlers had practically no Indian difficulties. Mention is made of Indians trading with the early merchants;² Indian "Jim" is said to have been a guide for early explorers in the area;³ and "John Coolie and Jack Meeks were two Indians who were liked by all the people."⁴ Myrtle Jensen recalls that as a youngster she often saw bands of Indians camped at the mouth of Grover Canyon, but she recalls no fear or timidity about their being there.⁵ Relationships with the Indians were indeed of an unusually peaceful nature.

On one occasion, however, word came that redskins from the Jackson Hole area were on the warpath and headed for the valley. Bessie Beachler recounts:

Soon the bewildered settlers were gathering food, clothing, bedding, and any valuables they possessed and were heading for the safest place they knew. Some went to Afton, some to Thayne and some went into the timber south of Bedford where they camped for two or three nights. Cows, calves, pigs and chickens were turned loose. Streaks of dust could be seen all over the valley as these people rushed with their few belongings atop a jag of hay, in any kind of vehicle available, toward safety. Hayracks were the most prominent in the caravan since the farmers were in the midst of the August haying season.

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Interview with Thomas Burton, Ogden, Utah, March 22, 1960.

³Beachler, op. cit., p. 6. ⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁵Interview with J. L. Hepworth, Rexburg, Idaho, March 15, 1962.

Men, women and children, horses, hayracks and hay, huddled together while the stouthearted with their single shot rifles, stood guard and planned what they would do should the Indians appear.

On this wild ride was one pioneer woman, wife of John W. Moser of Bedford, who could not go on. She and John were forced to stop at the homestead of John Miles and Fred Hale at Grover. With the assistance of her husband she gave birth to a baby girl. Lina Moser . . . started life with her parents not knowing when she or all of them might suddenly be scalped. She was born on August 7, 1895, and this establishes the date of the Indian scare.¹

Joseph Welch recalls:

Many in the upper valley banded together in the stone Auburn school house. The men were very frightened and would have shot at anything.

Ben Welch had not been so eager to go, but he finally decided he had better take his family to the school house for protection. They were just getting into the wagon when over the hills at the narrows came a long line of warriors. Ben knew he could never make it to the school house and he knew it would be useless to try to hold them back by himself, so he left his gun in the wagon and walked to meet them in hopes that some of his Indian friends might be with the group. He was very much surprised when he got closer and discovered that Old Man Hemmert from Thayne was leading the Indians. Mr. Hemmert explained to him that the Indians didn't want any trouble with the people from Star Valley. Hemmert realizing how nervous the people must be and that one gun shot might set off a massacre, had volunteered to guide the Indians through the Valley.²

The Indians expressed distaste in very crude terms for the people of Jackson Hole but expressed high regard for those in Star Valley. They were from an Idaho tribe which was accustomed to meeting a tribe from the Wind River area in an annual pow-wow of some kind near Jackson. It seems that on this

¹Beachler, op. cit., p. 6.

²Interview by Janice Reeves with Joseph Welch, Afton, Wyoming, summer, 1958.

particular occasion whites from Jackson had taken it upon themselves to inform the Indians that they were violating U.S. game laws. Some kind of unpleasant incident ensued, and evidently an Indian was killed although reports vary considerably. Whatever happened, those at Jackson seemed to feel that it warranted Indian ire, for they immediately notified Idaho Falls people who telephoned Montpelier, from whence a messenger was dispatched to warn the people of Star Valley. They were greatly relieved, of course, when no attack materialized.¹ But as a precautionary measure, a troop of federal soldiers were sent to the valley from Salt Lake City. Molly Smith, an old resident of Fairview, recalls, "These soldiers were Negroes and they spent ten days camped in the center of Fairview."²

Homes

One of the first demands that was made upon the pioneer was to provide shelter in the form of a log cabin. This called for considerable industry as well as the skill necessary to construct the building. Maud C. Burton, speaking of the typical pioneer cabin, says:

The spaces between the logs were chinked with split poles and then daubed over with mud or clay to seal the cracks. These cabins were low, dirt roofed, one or two room structures. They were brown color outside and inside until time and material were available for white-washing.

¹Beachler, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²Interview with Molly Smith, Afton, Wyoming, June 10, 1961.

Some had rough board floors which was almost a luxury, to say nothing of a rag carpet; but if a ceiling of unbleached muslin could be secured, they were "super-deluxe." They were frost proof in winter but when spring thaws melted the tall snow caps, it rained in the cabin while the sun shone overhead, awakening the mice, chipmunks and weasels that had made their lodges in the soft dirt roof. These found runways, or dropped from the ceiling to share the limited food supply. These cabins were built on the homesteads previously staked out by the settlers.¹

President George Osmond, who was the first stake president in Star Valley, moved from Bloomington in Bear Lake to Star Valley in 1892. Writing about life in an early log cabin, President Osmond's daughter-in-law tells the conditions under which Amelia, one of his wives, lived:

That first winter in Star Valley was probably the hardest of his (Pres. Osmond's) life. There were very few good houses in the valley and none vacant that were livable, so he moved Amelia and her three young sons into a one room cabin with a dirt roof. It was in the north east part of town near Swift Creek. . . . In this one room were beds, chairs, table and cook stove and a stand for dishes and some room left to work in. It served fairly well until the beginning of spring, then with melting snows and spring rains, the water came through the roof and the mud with it. To keep the beds from being soaked she used pans and kettles and even the umbrella was put to use to keep a few dry places in the room. There was one advantage however, the cracks in the bare wood floor let the water run on through.

They moved from the mud roofed room to a smaller room built of logs; it did have a shingled roof and did not leak. . . . The new home was very small and crowded, the logs of the walls were far apart with much chinking between, the wind would blow through the house and the snow would drift over the beds. Amelia stuffed rags in the cracks but the wind blew them out. It was impossible to keep warm. They also had bed bugs in the room.

One day the village blacksmith came to the family's aid. He said he could do his work in the cow shed and the President could move into the blacksmith shop. The roof did not leak and it was a large room; and although

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 9.

the floor was just dirt and it had housed horses, it was warm when there was a fire.

Amelia was not ungrateful but she was meticulously clean, and no matter how much she scrubbed the board walls or dug the dirt floor and carried it outside, it still smelled of horses.¹

It is quite apparent that living conditions were crude and hard. With the equipment that was available to these pioneers it is amazing that they built and lived as well as they did.

Clothing

The enterprising soul that survived acquired a multitude of talents. Clothing was at a premium in those days. Pioneers learned to tan the hides of elk and deer and from them make shirts, gloves, moccasins, and other items of wearing apparel, including some high top boots in which to wallow in the snow while making trails to the mountain slopes. One of the early pioneers, speaking of the scarcity of shoes, says:

Shoes suitable in size, were, for many of the families, not here. The skins from the hock joint of many a deer and elk and from the dead cattle have been worn by those pioneer men, women, and children.²

She continues as she recalls these makeshift shoes:

This is the way it was done; they would cut around the leg above and below the joint, carefully removing the bone, and not splitting the hide. Leave sufficient length of hide above and below making a tube which is turned inside out. The lower part is trimmed to fit the foot and toes, and the upper part to fit the ankle. This may be arranged for lacing [sic].³

¹Lucy Call Osmond, "George Osmond--A Biography" (MS., 1958, in possession of the author, Salt Lake City, Utah).

²Burton, op. cit., p. 5.

³Ibid.



Fig. 4.--A Typical Pioneer Cabin

Some of the women could weave cloth or carpet; many could spin and all could knit family socks and mittens. Nothing was wasted. When sheep died of starvation or other causes, the wool was picked from the dead sheep and woven into linsey for clothing.¹

Pioneer women

No doubt the toils of the men on this new frontier were hard, but certainly they had some pleasant moments as the summer months offered beauty in being in the outdoors, in the mountains and generally enjoying their work in the pleasant summer climate of the valley. Often, however, the wives of these men had a harder lot than their husbands. Again Maud Call Burton is quoted as she summarized the role of women in these pioneering ventures:

The Star Valley women were all heroines. Braving the mountain wilds, depending entirely on her spouse to provide a living from nature's store house, she could make an attractive home of dug-out or cabin. If her mate was logging, freighting, or otherwise from home, she often cut the wood to keep the home fires burning; harnessed the team and hauled the water; rode the pony to hunt the cows and then milked them. She knew all the flourishes of scrubbing-brush and washboard, and took pride in her freshly scrubbed floor and jetblack polished stove. She acted bravely when bands of Indians skulked near or when howling coyotes awakened the children from their sleep, she assured them of safety--which she did not feel herself. She could provide a good meal from only wild meat and flour, if necessary, but if she had milk and some dried serviceberries she could serve a banquet. . . . On Sundays she proudly tied a clean apron about her waist, donned a crisp sun-bonnet or home-made hat and rode with the family in a heavy wagon to church if it was too far to walk. In winter she could go on skis for miles. She could make

¹Hyde, op. cit., p. 45.

her family's clothes, including moccasins for her feet. She made soap from quaking aspen ashes and refuse fats and made tallow candles for winter nights. In summer time she took her children and went "berrying"--gathering wild fruit to dry and add to the winter store. She exchanged milk with neighbors and made cheese to store for winter. Churning butter and raising poultry were just forms of recreation for all the "ladies." They knew how to make a weary traveller welcome to their tiny homes which often meant making a bed on the floor which they themselves occupied, but they didn't even know how to powder their nose or use lipstick--strange they ever caught a beau.¹

Mrs. Burton, speaking of her mother, Alice J. Call,

says:

She was an active, public-spirited woman and a dress-maker. In case of death, she made the burial clothes and trimmed the caskets, which were made by her husband, and continued doing this for many years. . . . She was an excellent teamster, and one year, taking two or three of the smaller children, she drove the team to Salt Lake City, attended October Conference, secured a load of supplies for winter, and drove home, a three weeks trip, but a successful one, with great responsibility and much work. She made more costumes for dramas, parades and pageants than any other woman in the valley. . . . She could plow, and harrow, sow and harvest, as well as many other farm jobs. She also, possibly more than any other woman, did more for the betterment and up-lift of the higher ideals and finer things of life. In the drama she regularly took part for many years.²

Other women played an important and charitable role as mid-wives, or caring for those in physical distress. Constance Stephens Eggleston, wife of Orson H. Eggleston, served the community of Afton and vicinity for over fifteen years. In this period she delivered over four hundred babies.³ Also Mrs. Elsie Fluckiger Roberts served the people in this capacity, especially in the lower valley.⁴

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 10.

⁴White, op. cit., p. 81.

"The chief occupation of women in the early days," according to Elizabeth Cranney, "was housekeeping; and it was a full-time job with drawing water from a well, washing on the board or with a hand washer. In those days children wore clothes! Underwear with long sleeves and legs, long stockings, bloomers, and plenty of petticoats."¹ Not only was there the difficult task of washing, but the constant demand to prepare stable meals offered a challenge to these intrepid women. Such a meal as the following gives evidence of the type of diet these women set before their hungry children and hardy men. ". . . dinner consisted of elk and deer meat, plum pudding made from the tallow of the elk, wild strawberries, currants, gooseberries and service berries."² Of course, such a bill of fare was not too uncommon in the summer, but the winter months offered many restrictions. The enterprising housewife, however, preserved substantial amounts of food by drying it during the summer months; if and when sugar was available she preserved it by "canning." However, this was a rare treat.³

Recreation and culture

The life of the pioneer was by no means all work, hardship, and drudgery. S. P. Gheen has aptly stated:

Those were days of cooperation in practice as well as theory. In those early days of this community the people were united. We were all learning from a common cause,

¹Ibid., p. 82.

²Wright, op. cit., p. 109.

³Hyde, op. cit., p. 42.

namely, to try and establish homes and develop the country. We danced together, we worshipped together. True, we had some trials and adversities, but all in all life was pleasurable.¹

Each little community had its share of people talented in music and often a band or orchestra was organized which made dancing available and enjoyable. William Blanchard came to Afton in 1888. He was a gifted violinist and contributed much to the entertainment and culture of the community.² Lenore S. Fluckiger comments, "There always seemed to be musicians in the group and they made up their own orchestra for their dances. Sometimes it was the faithful old fiddler and sometimes there were other instruments but everyone took time out to have a good time and be neighborly."³

In the "History of Afton" we find recorded:

Dancing was the Saturday night standby. Men and women, young and old, came from all parts of the Valley by wagon, bob-sled and snow shoes bound for a merry time in the dim light of a tallow dip or a few tallow candles, until kerosene became available. If no fiddler was present, which happened only occasionally, they would sing and clap accompanied by a jews-harp and harmonica for the "balance all" and "swing on the corner"--they danced lively quadrilles and reels and they could really "swing, step and stomp." In these earlier years the people from a distance didn't go home 'til morning. They brought their lunch and stayed all night and attended the church service, returning home Sunday afternoon.⁴

The community of Auburn built a new meeting house in 1889. With regard to dances we find recorded:

It (this new meeting house) had a good hardwood floor and was the dance center of Star Valley for many years.

¹White, op. cit., p. 80.

²Hyde, op. cit., p. 45.

³Fluckiger, op. cit., p. 78.

⁴Hyde, op. cit., p. 52.

The hall was usually so crowded dance tickets were numbered and just a third of the numbers called for each dance so there would be room for the dancers. Only three round dances were allowed in one evening. Austin Hyde "called" the square dances. Ervon Foss, Bishop H. Hyde, Joe Walton and Seth Putnam all played the violin. Ed Hanen played the cornet. Two violins and the cornet made up the orchestra. When a piano was purchased F. N. Putnam chorded for the dances.¹

The community of Fairview made a significant contribution to the entertainment of the people of the valley. They had the first brass band and it was enjoyed by all the people in the valley. Known as "The Free Silver Band," it added spirit to many of the festive occasions and was especially remembered for its participation in parades. In the early years the band always traveled by wagon that was "always appropriately decorated and pulled by prancing horses."² As a public service they often stopped in the front of the homes of elderly people and played numbers upon request.³ This band was organized by Thomas Hood. Over the years many of the people of Fairview took part in this band.

Another important phase of the cultural life of these Saints was drama. Many productions were presented over the years. The Afton and Fairview wards had particularly active dramatic companies. Minny Dewey Maughn wrote in a letter:

I have to laugh when I think of it all and the good times we had. We must have been much like little children

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 11.

²Vilate Turner, et al., "History of Fairview," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 98.

³Ibid.

hungry for amusement of any kind. We always had an appreciative audience. Tickets were paid in eggs, butter, chickens, hay and etc. No cash at all. . . . All widows, missionary families and older members were admitted free. The season usually lasted from around Christmas until near spring, and our plays were produced over ten days to two weeks.¹

Maud Burton says, "The drama was the choicest of our winter entertainments, and usually two or more were presented each year. . . . After the drama a dance was usually held. Blocks of wood and benches were moved back near the wall; the music that played for the drama would start a lively tune and the dance would be under way."²

Occasionally a drama would be presented to raise money for some worthy cause. In The Star Valley Independent, December 7, 1906, we read the following advertisement that is of interest concerning drama in the valley:

THE OPERETTA "ELENOR"

Will be presented at the Afton Opera House on Friday December 14, 1906 by vocal Music pupils, both private and class, who are being instructed by Miss Margaret Call. A good time is promised. Tickets for adults 25¢, children 15¢.³

This notice also indicates that the settlers concerned themselves with the fine arts sufficiently to be taking music lessons.

Mrs. Burton, continuing on the subject of recreation and entertainment says, "Other popular amusements were

¹Rich, op. cit., p. 5.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 11.

³The Star Valley Independent (Afton), December 7, 1906.

quilting bees, candy pulls, rag sewing meets, with now and then a birthday party or a surprise, for good measure. Then to round out the sports calendar, they held shooting matches and horse races, and would sometimes, 'just visit.'¹

Other recreation came in the form of picnics, bonfires, and swimming at the warm sulfur springs north of Auburn.²

Water

The first pioneers to enter the valley settled near streams or springs so they were able to have the necessary water for culinary use as well as for livestock. When suitable locations near a spring or stream were no longer available the settlers dug wells and lifted the water with a rope and bucket. As soon as it was possible, however, water lines were made and water was made available to all. J. L. Hepworth gives an idea of what was representative of the building of a water line. Speaking of the first Grover water supply he says:

Each man living on center street was assessed \$20.00 in addition to bringing from the canyon Birdeye logs from eight to twelve inches in diameter. The logs were in eight foot lengths and were placed in a home-made vice while a two inch hole was bored thru them. A trimmer was attached which would trim the ends so it would fit together. The joints were sealed with white lead and a steel band clamped around the joints. The line at first reached J. August Anderson's where a public watering trough was built. Some time later the line was extended

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 11.

²Gardner, op. cit., p. 63.

down to the main road where another water trough was maintained. This water line served the people for twelve or fourteen years.¹

This was typical of each community's water supply. The flow through these small bored-out timbers was slow and often very inadequate. In spots the wood rotted away rather rapidly and added problems to the many they already had. Yet, overall, they found this better than hauling water from the springs or pulling it from an open well.

The rise of the merchant

When W. W. Burton left Utah because of the havoc that was being brought down on the heads of men who practiced polygamy, he left business establishments behind to be run by other members of his family. However, after he came to Star Valley it was not long before he was back in business. Thomas F. Burton, son of W. W. Burton, recalls that when he was a boy of sixteen his father brought to the valley (1886) several wagon loads of implements and other items to initiate the business that was to thrive throughout the years. Thomas likes to rehearse for his hearers how they sold goods out of a wagon at first, then later in a log building used as a store. It was actually more of a trading post inasmuch as most of the customers exchanged goods for the Burtons' wares. Mr. Burton states that the only customers they had that could and did pay for goods in cash were the Indians and immigrants that

¹Hepworth, op. cit., p. 6.

came through on the Lander Cut-off.¹

Allie Hyde, mentioning the first merchandising, says:

The first general store in Afton was operated by W. W. Burton in the year 1886. Goods were exchanged for butter, meat, hay or grain or whatever the settlers wished to exchange. The store first moved into a tent and in the summer of 1889 a two room log structure was completed. In the new store building Thomas F. Burton served as the first clerk. . . . Indian trade, together with people coming from other towns, made Burton's business thrive.²

Other merchandising establishments followed the Burton store. The Kingston and Hurd store played an important role in the development of the valley. This store specialized in handling, at least in the early period, such commodities as cream and butter from the local settlers.³ With the rise of the merchant, an interesting freighting business also arose which will be treated in a later chapter.

The role of the craftsman

To support a thriving settlement it was necessary to have various men skilled in different fields of labor. The average settler was expected to build his own cabin and possibly he could create certain other items of furnishings and the like; but even then, when style and refinement were desired, it fell the lot of the artisan in his respective field. Maud Call Burton, speaking of her father, says:

¹Interview with Thomas F. Burton, Ogden, Utah, March 22, 1961.

²Hyde, op. cit., p. 44.

³Interview with Albert E. Kennington, Afton, Wyoming, December 28, 1961.



Fig. 5.--An Early Mercantile Establishment in the Valley.

Anson V. Call, the builder, located at Afton in 1887 bringing in one wagon loaded with household equipment, winter supplies, carpenter tools and some hardware items for building a cabin. In one end of the cabin was his work bench. He built a turning lathe with which he made household articles to trade for milk, meat, etc. He turned legs for tables and made various articles for the settlers.

In the summer of 1888 he built a two room frame house. It was very distinctive in contrast with the log cabins. Lumber now was available and he took many contracts for the building of frame structures. In the fall of 1888 his brother Joseph H. Call moved to Star Valley and the following year 1889, they went into the building business together. Few log cabins were now built. Shingle roofs now replaced the dirt type, and many log houses were covered with rustic, changing the appearance of the entire landscape.

They were now known as Call Brothers and with the help of their sons built most of the frame houses and barns in both valleys for several years. From the making of various furniture items they began importing furniture and establishing the first furniture store in Star Valley.¹

Another craftsman who enhanced the living conditions in the valley was William Blanchard. He came in 1888. As previously mentioned, shoes were particularly scarce and hard to come by. This man was skilled and ". . . he made shoes and boots of elk and deer hide. Also he was the first to repair shoes and harnesses."²

Samuel Henderson, already mentioned as one of Osmond's earliest settlers, was also a fine carpenter and craftsman. He not only built furniture and helped with the first Osmond church house, but he freely taught others his trade.³

The necessity of getting lumber into the hands of the settlers was taken care of by such men as Harvey Dixon, Sam

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 14.

²Hyde, op. cit., p. 45.

³Leavitt, op. cit., p. 118.

Cazier, Thomas Yeaman, Crit Williamson, Archibald Gardner, Brigham Gardner, Eland Foster, and others.¹ In the year 1889 Archibald Gardner brought a sorely needed flour mill into the valley and set it up on the banks of Swift Creek.² Of course, there are others who made substantial contributions to the building of the several communities, but these are the names most frequently associated with this period.

Building the Tabernacle

After its first permanent settlers came in 1885, Afton soon became the largest town in Star Valley and the center for religious and civic activities. Stake conferences were held in Afton in the Afton ward chapel, which was totally inadequate for the occasion. President George Osmond, the Stake President of the Star Valley Stake from its organization in 1892, had longed to have a Stake Tabernacle built in Afton to accommodate the Saints in the valley. The early years had been hard years. The newspaper accounts that had told of the virtues of this land had failed to point out the hardships. Economic stability was slow in coming to these settlers. Lucy Call Osmond recalls:

Financial problems were still difficult. Men worked ten or more hours a day for \$30.00 and \$40.00 a month, if they could get the work. Many of the men went to the mountains to herd sheep. That was about the only work that paid cash wages. . . . The price of butterfat was

¹Hyde, op. cit., p. 44.

²"Afton Ward Record," 1889.

low but the people did get cash for it and that is what they needed in order to survive.

Summer frosts were another discouraging drawback to the financial development of the country. We would get a nice garden, full of promise and a frost would come and cut every living thing, except the weeds, to the ground.¹

The wherewithal for building churches did not come easy, yet President Osmond's great desire was to build a Stake Tabernacle. He felt that the people should worship together. They were always anxious for the Church officials to visit them and speak to them, but they badly needed a place to meet for such occasions.² And so, undaunted by lack of time and means, the people of the valley united and started construction on the Tabernacle in Afton in 1904.³ President Osmond was seventy years old at the time. He called a special meeting of the Saints in the valley and made the declaration to the people:

. . . that if they would pay their honest tithing and donate liberally of their time and money, even though it was a great sacrifice, that the frosts would retard and the climate would improve. Also that they would secure better markets for their produce and they would be better off financially and they would gain in health and happiness.⁴

A. V. Call was appointed as chairman of the building committee, no doubt because of his skill as a builder as well as his devotion to the Church.⁵ In August of 1904 the cornerstone was laid by Charles W. Penrose. The building that

¹Osmond, op. cit., p. 15. ²Ibid.

³Hyde, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴Osmond, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵"Star Valley Stake Record," 1909.



Fig. 6.--The Star Valley Stake Tabernacle,
the Day of the Dedication.

followed was middle English in design, with a tower ascending one hundred and forty feet. It was built of sandstone which was hauled from Poison Creek just west of Fairview.¹

Much of the labor on the building was donated. Money for the building was collected through the Priesthood groups. Still other funds came in from such sources as the proceeds from the knitting and handwork that was done by the women and sold in Montpelier and other places.²

A pipe organ pumped by hand was bought and placed in the building. Five years was required to build this imposing building. It was dedicated August 15, 1909, by President Joseph F. Smith, the President of the Church. The Stake President, George Osmond, was exceedingly pleased to see it built and have the opportunity to conduct several meetings in it.³

With the growth of the valley and the Church this beautiful edifice was found to be inadequate and a large addition was made on the north side of it. A "Historical Note" found on the back of the program for the Dedication Services that took place at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, September 19, 1943, is as follows:

This beautiful building as we have it today ties together the faith, sacrifice and industry of two peoples. Those of forty years ago and today. There are many here today who claim membership in both groups.

The old Stake Tabernacle, as we call it now, was commenced in 1904. Stake records show that on July 2, 1904

¹Hyde, op. cit., p. 46.

²Ibid.

³Osmond, op. cit., p. 15.

Anson V. Call was appointed a chairman of the Building Committee for the new structure. At 5:00 p.m. August 21, 1904, the Cornerstone was laid by Elder Charles W. Penrose, and the completed structure was dedicated to the Lord as a house of service by the President of the Church, Joseph F. Smith August 15, 1909. The Stake at that time had been organized but seventeen years, to the day, and had a population of approximately 2500 persons. Today we have approximately 4400. George Osmond was President of the Stake with Wm. W. Burton and Anson V. Call as counselors. Wm. H. Kennington was Stake Clerk.

This older structure, constructed of sand stone, is beautiful in architecture, its tower ascending 140 feet. It served as a gathering place for the saints of Star Valley for thirty-two years, twenty-seven of which Clarence Gardner served as president with Arthur F. Burton and Albert Barrus as counselors. It now becomes a part of another structure and promises many more years of useful service.

This new building was designed to tie up well with the old. The rock used in its construction was obtained from the same rock quarry where forty years ago men with teams and wagons journeyed to and from, transporting this durable and beautiful material.¹

¹Program of the Dedication Services of the Star Valley Stake, Afton North Ward Building, 10:30 A.M., Sunday, September 19, 1943.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER PIONEER ENTERPRISES

Merchants and craftsmen have been discussed in the previous chapter because of the prominent role they played in the lives of all the early pioneer families. Many other industries, business enterprises and professional services, however, were inaugurated at about the same time.

The salt works

As previously mentioned, one industry was thriving in the valley for some time prior to the coming of the first settlers in 1879. A Mr. Stump was carving out lumps of salt from the natural vein of this substance that is found in the southwestern section of the valley and hauling it to various areas--some say as far away as Oregon and Washington.¹ There is evidence that Mr. Stump set up a distillation apparatus and made pure salt from the Salt Springs west of the present site of Auburn. Lorean Gardner says of the matter:

One of the earliest industries in Auburn was boiling salt water from the Salt Spring west of town. The water was put in a large kettle and was boiled until all the water evaporated leaving pure white salt. This salt was peddled . . . over to Grey's Lake. Mr. Stump was the first to boil salt.²

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 2.

²Gardner, op. cit., p. 66.

This enterprise was carried on for many years, but just how long it has been difficult to ascertain; it is certain, however, that it played an important role in advertising Star Valley as well as adding to its growth and prosperity.

The tie camp

J. L. Hepworth mentions in his journal:

The first white men we know of that came to Grover were men from Idaho who came here and cut ties up Jensen's Canyon. They hauled them to the river by ox team. They loaded the ties on a raft and floated them down Salt River to Snake River and from there to Idaho. The trail they used is still seen in LeRoy Christensen's meadows.¹

The reference that Mr. Hepworth makes to this logging activity leads one to search for more evidence that these men were actually there and just what their business was. Mr. Hepworth states that when the first settlers came to Grover in 1885 they found evidence of the activities of the tie camp in both Jensen and Grover Canyons. In fact there was a cabin in one of the canyons and the chips from the chopping of trees were still reasonably fresh--not over a year or two old.²

It is interesting to note in Maud Call Burton's account written in 1915 the following entry:

Coo and Carter, contractors for railroad ties entered this valley by way of the Lander Trail, through Stump Creek Canyon, crossed over the mountains to Lower Star Valley and went on down to Snake River about a mile and a half from where Salt River empties into it. Here they and their employees cut timbers for ties for the Utah

¹Hepworth, op. cit., p. 1.

²Interview with J. L. Hepworth, June 10, 1961.

Northern Railroad. . . . They floated the logs down the river to a boom at Big Bend where the logs were taken out and counted. They worked there in 1881-82.¹

It is highly possible that these contractors mentioned by Mrs. Burton also worked in the upper valley, and that they were the same group who had before worked in the Grover area. The likelihood that this logging concern hired some of the early pioneers in 1881-82 is borne out by the fact that Jacob Grover worked for a tie camp in Grover Canyon prior to the settlement of Grover. As a matter of fact he was killed while working there.² (It will be remembered that Grover had come to Star Valley in 1879 with the first group that settled what is now Auburn.)

Lumber

The nearby canyons provided ample timber for the establishment of sawmills. Not only was there timber in abundance but water was available as a source of power. North of Afton and just east of the present community of Grover the first sawmill was constructed by Crit Williamson, Thomas Yeaman, and Helon Foster. This was a steam sawmill. The year was 1886.³ During the winter of 1885-86 Harvey Dixon and Sam Cazier had constructed a crude up-and-down saw and with this they had supplied a few boards for cabin floors.⁴

¹Wilde, op. cit., p. 5.

²Interview with J. L. Hepworth, June 10, 1961.

³Burton, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴Ibid.

Archibald Gardner, often referred to as "The Mill Builder," came to Star Valley in 1889.¹ The journal of Mr. Hepworth records:

Archibald Gardner came with a steam mill and located at the mouth of Mill Hollow. A house was built there to house the workmen. It was there for a year or two and was moved to Smoot. In 1895 the mill was brought back to Grover and set up in the lot east of Albert Jensen's. It was operated by Brig and Ozro Gardner and Rob and George Merritt.

In 1891 Edmund and Joseph Hepworth with Edward M. Hepworth, traded their shingle mill to the Gardner brothers for their saw mill, which came to the valley in the fall of 1889. The mill probably was brought across the plains by ox teams. It was an old type mill with screw head blocks.²

Also Mr. Gardner constructed a grist mill which provided some flour for the destitute Saints during the severe winter of 1889-90.

The dairy industry

Many of the first families that came to the valley brought cows with them, but many of them died.³ However, as time went on these frugal settlers found it necessary to obtain one or more cows to take care of their household needs. The products that could be produced from the milk offered a change and a treat in these settlers' bill-of-fare. At first when a family had more milk than they could handle, it was fed to calves or pigs.⁴ In the late eighties and early nineties a

¹Ibid. ²Hepworth, op. cit., p. 9.

³Burton, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴Interview with Wallace I. Gardner, Afton, Wyoming, December 28, 1961.

market was created by several enterprising individuals to buy butter and cheese from these pioneers. Also these two commodities could be exchanged for groceries and wearing apparel or implements to carry on their farming activities.

As an outcome of these markets, housewives began to let their milk sit overnight in flat shallow pans--then skim the cream from the top and churn it into butter. They also made cheese. Velma Linford describes the process as follows:

Butter was churned in barrel churns and molded in a wooden butter mold. These utensils were crude and home-made but effective. Likewise use was made of the homely devices for cheese making. Galvanized laundry tubs were the vats, a typical one being one tub within a larger one. Water was in the larger vessel and milk in the smaller. A fire was built under the vat to heat the milk, double boiler fashion. Some cheese makers told when the cheese was done by the feel and smell of the curd. Cheeses were molded in hoops and cheese cloth, were pressed in a heavy wooden contrivance which screwed down a cover upon the cheese pressing the whey out. The cheese was next covered with melted butter in lieu of wax and placed on shelves to dry.¹

It was soon found, however, that manufacture of butter and cheese on a larger scale was more practical. Many of the old residents of the valley can recall when cream was sold by the inch.² (Housewives stored it in half-gallon crocks.) The collected cream was then taken to a central location and churned into butter or turned into cheese. Such men as Tommy Wild and A. R. Moffat worked hard on these enterprises. Mr.

¹Velma Linford, "Star Valley and Swiss Cheese," The Improvement Era, XL (October, 1937), 608-609.

²Interview with Albert E. Kennington, Afton, Wyoming, December 28, 1961.

Moffat hauled these products out of the valley to various mining towns--Almy, Evanston, Kemmerer, Rock Springs, and others.¹ Also the Burton Store and the store of Kingston and Hurd encouraged trade by taking butter and cheese then shipping it out of the valley.²

While cream collections were being made, other men established dairies. Such men as Dee Raney of Afton, Thomson of Grover, and Lindholm of Freedom rented cows from anyone they could and milked them, made cheese or butter, then paid the rent on the cows with the commodity produced. They sold the rest to merchants and freighters.³ The Hepworth journal has recorded:

Since there was no sale for whole milk, cream was skimmed off the milk in a shallow pan. Tommy Wild paid 25¢ an inch for cream. Cream was taken to the Tomsen Ranch where it was churned into butter. They used a large wooden churn run by water power. Later people bought churns of their own to make butter for selling. It was sold to the Kingston and Hurd store. They would get half cash and half store pay.

From 1892 to 1897 Pet and Hans Nelson, James Jensen, Sr., and James Jensen, Jr., maintained a dairy in Bradshaw canyon. They milked their own cows and some they rented on shares. They built a special building where they cared for the cheese. Each day the cheese had to be greased and turned until it was cured. The rent for the cows was paid in cheese. The cheese was hauled to Utah and sold.⁴

¹Bessie Merritt, "The Dairy Industry of Star Valley," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³Interview with J. L. Hepworth, Grover, Wyoming, June 10, 1961.

⁴Hepworth, op. cit., p. 8.

Of course Mr. Hepworth tells of conditions in Grover, but they were typical of the rest of the valley.

Lucy Osmond informs us that her father was concerned about establishing a good market and a creamery:

President Osmond would lay awake nights trying to work out some plan whereby the people could get the needed money for a livelihood. That was the great need for the successful thriving of the community. He thought if he could get an outside market for cheese, it could be hauled to a shipping station in fair or saleable condition. This was his dream or plan, he confided in his counselors and they thought it could be worked out.

W. W. Burton was in the general merchandising business and favored such a project, he would furnish half of the price and President Osmond and one Dee Raney, then in the cattle business, would furnish the other half of the needed funds, and they financed a creamery.

There were many difficulties and handicaps but they did get a creamery and a market for cheese. They were too far from the market to handle eggs or butter. It was a good country in which to raise hay and so, though the beginning was humble, it has since proven a great boon to these isolated people.¹

The Burton account mentioning the development of this project says:

The project developed beyond highest hopes and again stepped up sales, and it did more than this, it brought to attention the fact that Star Valley was a dairy possibility of the first magnitude with its abundance of luxurious grass, plentiful supply of pure spring water, and invigorating climate.²

With this beginning in 1900, the creamery business rapidly expanded. Soon creameries were built and put into operation in several of the communities. A co-op creamery known as the "Union Creamery" was erected west of Afton.³

¹Osmond, op. cit., p. 12. ²Burton, op. cit., p. 14.

³Merritt, op. cit., p. 20.



Fig. 7.--The First Burton Creamery .

The Thatcher brothers built a creamery at Thayne on what was called the Muddy Spring now called Creamery Spring.¹ The Burtons soon expanded their enterprise and built creameries at Smoot, Auburn and Freedom. A man by the name of Jensen built creameries at Grover, Thayne, Fairview and Etna.² Large herds of dairy cows soon became the mainstay in the economy of this growing district.

After the initial start with the creamery business farmers found it easy to market their milk with the creameries near at hand to handle and process it. The role played by those men that hauled the milk to the creameries probably remains unsung. Just to give a glance at the obstacles that often faced these men, S. P. Gheen reminisces:

Those were the good old days, plenty of snow, but we enjoyed good health and the creamery industry, though at that time it was only in its infancy in Etna, still carried on and not a few times when the milk sleigh would reach my place from further down the line, they would have one or both of the horses about give out, and I often put in an extra horse to get the product to the creamery.³

New and competitive organizations came to Star Valley and often bought out the original owners of the creameries. Kraft Foods bought out the Burtons, and the Jensen concerns were bought out by Mutual Creamery Company. Still later the dairymen of the valley organized the Star Valley Dairymen Association with Carl Robinson as fieldman. As an outcome of this association the Star Valley Swiss Cheese Company was

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 20.

³White, op. cit., p. 80.

organized and Swiss as well as other cheese began to be made in huge quantities.¹

It was during these years of growth in the dairy industry that Star Valley was given the name of "Little Switzerland of America." Indeed the climate and mountainous terrain is much like Switzerland and conducive to making cheese and butter.²

Sheep and cattle

Not only dairy cows and the creamery business took the time of these industrious people but other forms of raising livestock. The Deseret News for July 2, 1900, says, speaking of Star Valley: "Sheep and cattle interests here are immense, and the people are becoming quite prosperous through these industries."³ To show the extent of the cattle and sheep industry in the valley the Deseret News for June 1, 1900, says:

Some 75,000 sheep are feeding here at present. The people of Star Valley own about 10,000 head of cattle and about the same number of sheep. People in want of homes will make no mistake in locating in Star Valley and Salt River Valley. Over 14,000 acres of good land will be thrown open.⁴

A woolen mill

Sheep were brought into the valley by many of the early Saints, but it was difficult to find a market for the

¹Merritt, op. cit., p. 21. ²Ibid.

³Deseret News (Salt Lake City), July 2, 1900.

⁴Ibid., June 1, 1900.

wool sheared from these animals. Allie Hyde tells of an attempt to establish a woolen mill:

Because they had no easy way to market their wool and since they had by 1896 quite a number of sheep, an attempt was made to establish a woolen factory. Archibald Gardner solicited financial help and personally directed the erection of the flumes, races, penstock and building. Edmund Buckley of Franklin, Idaho was induced to furnish the machinery and with the help of his son John Buckley the mill began to operate. It was located up Swift Creek Canyon, at the brow of the first small knoll, a little south of the present road.

The venture was not a success however, and the business was abandoned after two or three years. Several articles made in this factory are still owned by some of the older pioneers.¹

The first newspaper

In 1901, Emil Vaterlaus established a printing office and started the first newspaper--a weekly called The Star Valley Pioneer. Two years later it was purchased by Conrad Vaterlaus, who changed the name to The Star Valley Independent, by which it is still known today (1962). The Independent was sold to Henry Billings in 1908. He hired O. H. Eggleston as typesetter and published the paper until 1913, when it was purchased by John Ayers. In the next three years a succession of short-term publishers owned the paper, and then Clyde Settle purchased it and set up the first linotype. In 1921, Roland and Truman Call bought the office, and members of the Call family have retained the ownership through the years.²

It was gratifying to the people to have their own newspaper, and although the news of world-shaking national and

¹Hyde, op. cit., p. 44.

²Ibid., p. 47.

international events did not constitute the headlines, the advertisements, public notices, and personal columns were of the utmost interest. Typical are the following:

Mens' and Boys stockings knit for 10 to 15 cents a pair, when you furnish your own yarn. Women and girls 12 to 20 cents.

Market Report (Corrected Weekly)

Flour, High Patent per cwt	\$2.75
Oats, per cwt	\$1.10
Eggs, per dozen	\$.20
Butter, per pound	\$.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Hay, per ton	\$3.00 $\frac{1}{2}$

The front-page story of the September 12, 1902, edition is interesting from the standpoint of history as well as illustrating the journalistic style:

Robbery in Afton

One of the boldest robberies ever committed in these parts was perpetrated during the night of 4-5. inst., when the Afton Postoffice was broken into by burglars. It seems the whole affair was well planned and fully as well executed. Mr. Arthur Roberts, who is the Postmaster here, keeps the P.O. in his store on Mainstreet. He is away on a vacation to the National Park, leaving his daughter Miss Katie in charge of the office. Thursday morning Aroet L. Hale our deputy sheriff and city marshal also went away, down into Utah, leaving Jos. Call in charge. About 2 o'clock A.M. a buggy was heard driving into the yard of Mr. Robert's place of business and the robbers immediately effected an entrance by the rear door. Once inside, they seemed to take their time, as there was no one to hurt nor make afraid. They selected the best jewelry from the cases, underwear from the shelves etc., while another busied himself drilling a hole, preparatory to blowing open the safe. The door of the safe was completely wrecked and all the contents, including cash, notes, checks, deeds, insurance policies, stamps, blank moneyorders, registered letters, in fact everything whether of use to the robbers or not, was taken. An innocent looking sack of flour was left standing showing it had been used to deafen the report of the blast. The money till under the counter was broken into and some elk teeth therein were extracted. After the looting was completed, the robbers opened the front doors, walking

¹Star Valley Pioneer (Afton, Wyoming), December 5, 1902.

out to their buggy and leaving the doors wide open. Parties at the Reese Hotel heard a buggy drive out of town about 3 o'clock at a terrific pace. This is all the clue so far obtainable of the perpetrators. The total amount of the stolen property will foot up to about 1,500 dollars. With the exception of the safe and money drawer, no other damage was done. No attempt was made to organize a posse, the constable living a mile out of town was not notified until 10:00 A.M. The robbers may be in Klondike by this time, or still in Afton for ought anybody knows.¹

Too choice to omit, is this bit of humor published on June 12, 1908:

Our beloved mayor, dignified in his new position in the City Government, with his head high in the air was seen strutting homeward. As he arrived at the edge of a ditch he gave a great and mighty spring, lo! and behold! the grass being damp, his feet slipped and his mayorship landed on his back in the ditch. We won't undertake to state that he was completely immersed but we will say that the water which ran down the inside of his collar came out of the bottom of his pants.²

Men of medicine

The unselfish service of the midwives and volunteer practical nurses has already been discussed; theirs was an important role for many years, because even though there was a doctor in Afton from 1889 on, Afton was many miles of poor roads away from most of the settlers.

Speaking of the early physicians, Clarissa Merritt states:

The first medical doctor, Arthur V. Stoughton located in the Valley in about 1889 and was welcomed by the people. Dr. G. W. West came to the Valley in 1903 and

¹Ibid., September 12, 1902.

²The Star Valley Independent, June 12, 1908.

has since that time lived in Afton. He is still living (1951) but during the last few years has given up his medical practice. For some forty-five years he served the people, being always the true country doctor; braving all kinds of weather, going by horseback, sleigh, wagon and even on foot. There are few homes in the whole Valley who haven't benefitted by this man's administrations. It was not uncommon for him to spend the night sitting by the bedside of some sick patient and many were cared for by his devoted wife in their own home.¹

Dr. L. C. Proctor, who came to Afton in 1905, was the first permanent dentist, and he practiced for nearly fifty years.

In 1913 the Church authorities of the Star Valley Stake invoked the aid of the Presiding Bishopric of the Church to help start a hospital. An old building was subsequently remodeled and used as a hospital. Mrs. Merritt remarks, however, that "facilities were poor, especially heating, and it didn't last long."² It was 1931 before an attempt was made to establish another hospital.³

¹Merritt, op. cit., p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 61.

³This was a hospital above the post office building--small and inconvenient, but better than nothing. In 1944 a new, modern hospital was completed. It is owned and operated by the Latter-day Saint Church.

CHAPTER VIII

FOLKLORE

As is universally true, the Star Valley area has its own favorite legends, traditions, and tall tales. Whenever a few of the "old timers" get together to reminisce, the youngsters gather around eagerly and listen wide-eyed. It would be difficult to determine just how big the biggest bear ever shot in the area might have been. It would be likewise difficult to tell how many inches and pounds many of the noteworthy bruins have grown in the last fifty years since their demise. Some, without doubt, would have taxed the prowess of Paul Bunyan himself. But then who was Paul Bunyan compared with any home-grown Star "Vallian"?

The Whitney Gang

The saga of Hugh Whitney, western badman, is one of the favorite of all the tales of the "olden days" not only in Star Valley but throughout western Wyoming and southern Idaho. The way many people remember Hugh Whitney is reminiscent of Robin Hood, but others recall only cold fear at the mention of his name. It was Hugh's uncle, Charlie Manning, who is said to have started the Whitney brothers--Hugh and Charlie--on their life of crime; but it was the personality and daring of Hugh that made the trio famous. Later, Hugh traveled

chiefly alone. They centered their activities in Cokeville, Wyoming, south of Star Valley, but one of their favorite hideouts was in the valley. Strangely enough, there are still many citizens who would gladly claim Hugh as a native son.

It is difficult, even impossible, to distinguish fact from fantasy where Hugh Whitney is concerned. There are some facts, however, around which the legend was built. Hugh and Charlie Whitney came to Cokeville while boys in their teens. They worked for Pete Olson and Frank Mau at different times. Both were handy with their pistols, but Hugh was a crack shot. Bert Pope, who also worked for Mr. Mau in the early 1900's, told how he, then only a teen-age boy himself, would often hear Hugh riding back to the ranch after dark at a high gallop. Night after night he would hear three quick shots ring out. Next morning Hugh would walk out along the fence line and examine one or another of the fence posts. Usually that post bore three new bullet holes.¹

Henry Redford of Star Valley also recalls:

I worked with Hugh Whitney on one of the big ranches around Cokeville. He was the fastest gunman I have ever seen. One of his favorite sports was seeing how many times he could hit a can that was thrown up in the air. He could hit it five or six times before it hit the ground.²

¹Interview with Arden Pope, Cokeville, Wyoming, June 10, 1962.

²Janice Reeves, "The Whitney Brothers" (MS., summer of 1958). Miss Reeves has long been interested in these men, inasmuch as she grew up near their old "hideout." After interviewing several men who were acquainted with the Whitneys she wrote this article. The manuscript is in possession of this writer.

Some years later, Hugh, with a fifteen hundred dollar price on his head, rode out of Cokeville to the west. As he crossed a bridge, an enterprising man (unidentified as far as this author is concerned) stepped out from under the bridge and ordered Whitney to put up his hands. It was dusk--almost dark. Hugh's hand came up, and with it his pistol. Whirling, he shot three fingers and the gun from his would-be captor's hand. "I'm sorry," said the always courteous bandit. "I don't like bloodshed; but don't make the mistake of drawing on Hugh Whitney a second time."

There are newspaper accounts that he was a killer, but most old-timers refuse to believe it. He was never brought to trial, and nothing was ever proved against him. "It was Charlie Manning who did the killing. Hugh was no murderer. Fast with a gun, yes. But he was a gentleman,"¹ is a typical comment.

If he was a gentleman, it was by his own standards. He may have been a high-principled bandit, but he and his cohorts were bandits nonetheless. They robbed trains on several occasions, they twice robbed saloons in Cokeville, and on September 11, 1911, they robbed the State Bank of Cokeville. It was to Star Valley that they fled to hide.

No doubt there were several reasons that none of the many posses organized were successful in catching the Whitneys. If Hugh had never shot to kill, no one doubted his ability to

¹Interview with Arden Pope, Cokeville, Wyoming, June 10, 1962.

hit his mark if he should change his mind. No one was eager to back him into a corner. It is said that it was with relief that one posse of Star Valley men disbanded after searching for the Whitneys in the Gray's River area. Returning to their camp weary and wary, they found their food supplies gone and a note signed by Hugh Whitney in which he expressed regret that he had been forced to take their food and the conviction that it would be easier for them to get more than for him.

Fear was not the only thing that kept people from concentrating their efforts on capturing Hugh Whitney. Many people seem to have felt a strange sympathy for this affable young man gone bad. The best remembered tales are like that of Hugh Whitney, masked and formidable, asking a forlorn old lady on a train if she had really turned over all her money. When she said that that twenty was all she had in the world, he returned it with a second twenty.

Jean Stoner of Cokeville was in the bank waiting to deposit the day's receipts from the Bear River Mercantile Company when the Cokeville Bank was robbed. She recalled that she was lined up against the wall at gun point while all the depositors were forced to turn over their money. To her Hugh said, "Won't take money from a pretty lady, ma'am."¹

People also recall the story of Hugh sticking up a saloon, taking the cash and then demanding the owner's diamond ring. At this request, the man began blubbering sentimental

¹This incident was recalled by the author's wife who knew Mrs. Stoner personally.

phrases about the ring being a gift from his mother; whereupon Hugh returned the ring. Down through the years the victim remains the villain of the story, having resorted to deceit to keep Hugh Whitney from stealing a valuable ring.

Many a shepherd in the Star Valley country could boast that Hugh Whitney had been his dinner guest. It is said that he would ride up, help himself to a feed of grain for his horse, and then invite himself to dinner. According to tradition, he was never heard to threaten anyone or ask that the shepherd not tell that he had been there. After the meal he would give his thanks and be on his way.

Thomas Burton recalls that as a young man he lived with his family in the south end of Star Valley. Nearby was a deserted cabin often used by the Whitney gang. Any sign of activity at the cabin was a signal for the Burton family to keep their distance. Although the Whitneys never did them harm, they feared them. Still, Mr. Burton observes, there was no thought of reporting their whereabouts.¹

Rula Crook remembers Hugh and his companions as something of celebrities in the valley:

The Whitneys were always in and out of trouble--especially Hugh. Whenever it got too hot for them, they would ride to Star Valley and hide out. Sometimes Manning and Charley Stoner would come with them. They became well known in the valley and some of the girls went out with them. Some people invited them into their homes for meals. . . . They made a deep impression on people. I'll never forget the day when I came out of my home and looked

¹Interview with Thomas Burton, Ogden, Utah, March 22, 1960.

down the street toward my father's store in Smoot and saw a real gun fight in progress. On the porch of the store behind pack saddles were the Whitney brothers, and on the other side of the street was Charley Stoner. They were firing away at each other. I was so frightened that I ran and hid in the cellar and would not come out until it was stopped. . . . Apparently they just got mad at each other and decided to fight it out, but luckily no one was hurt. Many times these men would have meals with our family.¹

Ernest Reeves says that the favorite game of Star Valley youngsters was not "cops 'n robbers" in the usual sense, but "Hugh and Charlie versus the law." He says, however, that when the gang appeared in person, "the people would stay close to home and the children would run and hide. Naughty children were always threatened that if they were not good, the Whitneys would get them."²

Soon after the bank robbery of 1911, the Whitneys disappeared. Hugh was reported to have been killed in a train holdup between Pocatello, Idaho, and Cokeville, but it proved to be his uncle, Charlie Manning.

Many were the theories as to what happened to the Whitneys. There was speculation that they had gone to South America to continue their life of violence. Those who knew them personally, however, preferred to believe otherwise. Men like Bert Pope, for example, maintained that Hugh and Charlie were born cattlemen and would have established somewhere as ranchers.

Not until June of 1952 was the mystery cleared away.

¹Reeves, op. cit.

²Ibid.

At that time Charles Whitney, alias Frank Taylor, of Valley County, Montana, wrote to the governor of Wyoming voluntarily giving himself up. He had, for forty years, been a respected Montana rancher. His brother Hugh had been ranching in British Columbia and had recently passed away. The letter was accompanied by numerous character references and was, in part, as follows:

Most Honored Sir:

I wish to state that I, Charlie S. Whitney, on my own volition and motivated by the dictates of my conscience, wish in all humility to announce that I wish to answer to charges which have for over forty years been pending against me by the state of Wyoming.

My brother, Hugh, died last fall on Oct. 24, and his passing was a hard blow to me, and since he is gone I find myself devoid of an incentive to continue this life of shame any longer.

I have resided in Valley County, Montana, since the fall of 1912, and I have an unimpeachable record here as an honest and reputable citizen. . . . but that does not exonerate me from the follies of my youth and the debt I incurred against the society and the state of Wyoming.

I sold my birthright for a few dollars that I took from the Cokeville bank back in September, 1911, for my brother's sake and my love and loyalty to him. Society does not endorse such actions as I took to save my brother from the serious predicament that he was in, but at that time it seemed to me the right thing to do.¹

Charlie was subsequently pardoned by the governor of Wyoming. Hugh Whitney's life is ended, but his legend lives on.

Matt Warner and Tom McCarty

It is unlikely that Butch Cassidy himself ever spent much time in Star Valley, although early settlers say he hid

¹Kemmerer Wyoming Gazette, June 20, 1952.

out there a few times. Matt Warner and Tom McCarty, two of his henchmen, were well known there, however. Warner and McCarty were with Cassidy during the summer of 1889 and held up the bank at Telluride, Colorado. They made good their escape with \$10,500. They lay low for a few days and then, according to Charles Kelly, they spent a short time in Lander, Wyoming, whence they were forced to flee a posse using bloodhounds. Mr. Kelly continues:

Star Valley was then and still is an isolated section surrounded by mountains and well off main routes of travel. . . . In the long, deep valley of the Salt River, fugitives from the law, whether polygamists, cattle rustlers, or bank robbers, felt perfectly safe. It is not known whether any of the "Invincible Three" (Matt Warner, Butch Cassidy, Tom McCarty) had been in Star Valley previously, but either by accident or design they chose it as their winter hideout, arriving probably in late August. Early winter snows soon closed all passes, and settlers and outlaws were marooned until spring.

In relating their experiences of that winter (1889-90), neither Matt Warner nor Tom McCarty mentions Butch Cassidy . . . evidence indicates that Butch separated from the other two at Wind River. . . .

Tom and Matt still had their share of the Telluride loot, amounting to about \$3,500 each, a small fortune in those hungry days in Star Valley. They told the settlers they were cattlemen, had just sold their ranch, and were looking for a new location, a story no one questioned. Matt was then twenty-five years old and Tom somewhere near fifty. They gave their names as Tom Smith and Matt Willard.

Purchasing a log cabin on the outskirts of Afton . . . the two outlaws prepared for the long winter by buying several fat cattle and a large stock of groceries. In one end of the cabin Matt fixed up a small bar and began serving drinks to all his friends. . . . The wall back of this bar, according to old-timers in Afton was papered with green backs, among them a \$10,000 bill.

All stories seem to agree that the denomination of that bill was \$10,000 and that it was pasted on the wall because the robbers were afraid to spend it or present it to any bank for bills of smaller denomination. . . .

With more cash in their pockets than Star Valley had ever seen before, it is not strange that Tom and Matt

soon became the most popular men in Afton and were invited to the homes of all their neighbors. Nearby lived the Rumel family consisting of Mr. Rumel, his wife (formerly Mrs. Morgan), a daughter Rosa Rumel (fourteen years old), and her half sister, Sadie Morgan. In a short time Matt was sparking Rosa, and he must have made quick progress because they were married in Montpelier, Idaho, on September 4, 1889.¹

Mr. Kelly later indicates that Tom married Sally Morgan. Inhabitants of Afton agree in essence with his account. Bessie Beachler, however, says that the cabin was the first saloon in Star Valley and the outlaws lived with Lars Halling who owned a ranch slightly north of Afton. One day, just for sport, Warner shot the hat off Lars' head; then he told him to pick it up and throw it as high as he could into the air. As it fell McCarty and Warner riddled it to pieces with bullets. It was winter and Halling had no hat, so the two culprits rode to the store in Afton; but there were not felt hats in stock. The merchant dug up a summer straw hat, however; and this they took home to Lars, who finished the winter out in straw.

Mrs. Beachler observes that these fellows had plenty of cash and that "they assisted many poor families during the hard winter of 1889-90. They took clothes and provisions to many who probably would have died without their help."²

Kelly concludes the account of their sojourn in the

¹Charles Kelly, A History of Butch Cassidy and His Wild Bunch (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1959), pp. 33-36.

²Beachler, op. cit., p. 12.

valley as follows:

In the spring two officers arrived with a warrant for Tom and Matt. . . . Tom ran them out of the valley with a rifle; but it became evident Star Valley was no longer a safe place, so the two men put their wives in a buckboard and headed for Jackson Hole, still deep in snow. Camping out, however, was too uncomfortable at that time of year, so the four headed for Butte, Montana, where the balance of their Telluride loot was soon spent in high jinks.

When they found themselves almost broke again, Tom and Matt gave their wives \$100 each and sent them back to Star Valley, with the excuse that they had to go to British Columbia to look after some gold mines and would send for the girls later.¹

Other renegades

Lorean Gardner recalls that soon after the above-mentioned badmen had spent the winter there, two other fugitives from justice came to Auburn. They were caught in a snowstorm and forced to spend the winter. Inasmuch as George Davis had plenty of hay and fed their horses and they were allowed the use of an empty cabin in the vicinity, they did not seem to mind. They called themselves Al Heiner and George Cassidy. Heiner played cards with the local citizenry while Cassidy seemed to prefer just visiting. It is reported that neither of them participated in the dances, nor did they drink. They were well liked by the people of Auburn who were much surprised when in the spring of the year seven officers came in for these men. Heiner was at the sawmill watching the men saw logs when the officers found him, and he surrendered without a struggle. The settlers were amazed to find that even when he was handcuffed and without a gun one officer

¹Kelly, op. cit., p. 35.

would not consent to stay alone with him. Two remained while the other five went down to the George Davis home to get Cassidy. It was Cassidy who was reputed to be able to drive nails with his bullets.

Mrs. Gardner's account of his arrest is as follows:

The officers walked in and said that they had come to arrest Cassidy. "Have you a warrant?" asked Cassidy. "I don't need a warrant to arrest you," answered Caverly. Cassidy drew his gun and took a small nick out of Caverly's ear. Caverly attempted to shoot twice, but his gun snapped both times. By this time an officer hit Cassidy on the head and knocked him down. He was hit several times and then shot in the forehead, but it was not a deep wound.

They took Cassidy to Harrison's store, and some of the townspeople bandaged his head. He had big gashes in his head besides the bullet wound. As they left the store the outlaws shook hands with the people. While the officers were taking them out through Crow Creek Canyon, he (Cassidy) kept taking his hands out of the handcuffs and adjusting the bandages on his head. He had small hands and big wrists. He said, "I was waiting for a chance to get one of their guns, and then I was going to build up the cutest little smoke you ever saw." But his chance never came.¹

Buried treasure

As the outlaw era passed away, rumors--whether initiated by wishful thinking or not--sprang up that some of these men had buried loot in the valley. The Stump Creek area has been the scene of many a futile search, and some have said that there is treasure in the vicinity of Smoot as well. The Smoot deposits are said to have been hidden by immigrants

¹Gardner, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

who were being troubled by Indians; but it, too, remains undiscovered.¹

The spring that breathes

Swift Creek, rushing and roaring down its steep canyon bed, baffled many of the first comers to Afton with its strange behavior. For eighteen or twenty minutes the stream would be quite high and then for a like period the water flow would calm down considerably. This curious phenomenon puzzled the settlers and led the more superstitious into wild speculation. Some thought it was a stream bewitched, and for a long time it was surrounded with mystery. Its gasping, choking, roaring noise was so eerie by night that most people preferred to stay away during the hours of darkness.

Archibald Gardner, who operated a saw and flour mill at the mouth of the canyon, observed that his mill race visibly fluctuated. He used to be heard to murmur, "This water must come from a spring that breathes."² His son Clarence later discovered the intermittent spring which is Swift Creek's source, and the mystery, for all practical purposes, was solved.³

¹Interview with Betsy Erickson, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 22, 1960.

²Hyde, op. cit., p. 56.

³Ibid. (Mrs. Hyde explains: Seven miles east of Afton in Swift Creek Canyon is the geyser, a spring that breathes. During the high water season in spring and early summer this natural phenomenon can be observed only by watching closely the rise and fall of the flow, measuring it

Ghosts of Gadianton

In spite of a scientific explanation of the phenomenon of the creek, an air of mystery continued to shroud the Gardner mill. The noises of the creek were just as terrorizing as before, and strange things occurred between dusk and dawn. It is said that frequently the mill workers would find their axes far removed from the spot they had left them, sometimes hanging in precarious positions. Log chains would come up missing and were often rediscovered beneath piles of logs it would have been impossible to move and replace during a single night. Other piles of logs, some of them huge, would be found strewn helter skelter like match sticks or sawed into pieces of curious shape.

The theory perpetuated by some native imagination was that the ghosts of the Gadianton robbers who inhabited this land centuries ago were still engaged in works of darkness.¹

against the water marks on the rocks. As July fades into August and this month surges toward autumn the sporadic action of the spring is visibly apparent. Then it flows for eighteen or twenty minutes and then ceases entirely for a like period.

As the water vanishes into the crevices and beneath the stones of the spring's gaping orifice, which yawns from the face of a sheer perpendicular cliff, it is attended by a loud sucking sound of rushing air.

What makes the spring start and stop? No one knows for certain. The most logical reason seems to lie in the siphon theory. Probably this surface water comes from a subterranean cistern fed by underground springs.

The only other similar springs in the world are two small ones, one in New Zealand, the other in Yugoslavia.)

¹These people, being members of the Mormon faith, were well acquainted with The Book of Mormon, a sacred record of the ancient inhabitants of America. Therein is contained an account of a terrorist organization known as the Gadianton Robbers.

Temple Bench

The outlaws came and went, having found well-wishers in only a relatively few. The noisy creek continued to serve the needs of the people, and most were grateful for its generous supply of life sustaining water. Only the most superstitious gave credence to the ghost stories of the old mill, and the treasure hunters were chiefly young lovers more interested in watching the moon than digging. The tradition which perhaps gives better insight into the people of the valley than all these is that of "Temple Bench." A prominent point east of Afton has been designated by that title since a day early in the valley's history when Moses Thatcher is said to have remarked, "What a beautiful spot for a temple!"¹ Many believed that the place was actually dedicated for the construction of a temple at some future date. Others claim it was "propheesied" that a temple would be built there. Although the written record does not substantiate either of these beliefs, they are indicative of the fondest hopes, dreams, and traditions of the majority of Star Valley's residents--that they might remain closely, actively associated with the work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is the reason most of their ancestors came to the valley in the first place.

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1880.

CHAPTER IX

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The isolation of Star Valley imposed a problem for the settlers inasmuch as heavy winter snows restricted travel even more than distance did. Certainly the first arrivals in the valley found access to this secluded spot a real problem with which to struggle. It will be recalled that the group that settled in Freedom in 1879 was three weeks literally crawling over the mountains from Bear Lake, a distance of only sixty miles. The severity of the winters with intense cold and deep snow made the settlers fearfully aware of their confinement. If, perchance, they found themselves without sufficient food, then they had to ski or snowshoe out to Montpelier and carry supplies back to their waiting families on their backs.¹

As settlers moved into the valley it was apparent that getting passengers and freight into and out of the area would be hard and sometimes hazardous. The route to Montpelier via Crow Creek was the most practical. The Burton account telling of freighting merchandise and supplies into the valley in 1886 says, "These trips required about three weeks each. The work was hard on the teams, though loading was of necessity light,

¹Esther M. Crook, "Transportation," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 38.

due to poor roads."¹ It was not uncommon in these early days for wagons to tip over on steep mountain sides, or for men and teams to be caught in rainstorms and have a battle struggling to get out of the mud.²

Mail

Esther Crook observes, "Up to the year 1888, there was no communication, mail, or passenger service to the valley."³ Prior to this time communications or mail were carried by any willing persons who were for one reason or another going into or out of the valley. Often the mail came in only in the spring and went out in the fall.⁴

The summer of 1888 marked a change in the mail system, however, for at this time the settlers hired A. Lu Hale and John Tolman to haul the mail between Afton and Montpelier. Later that summer the government established a semi-weekly mail route between these two points. An account of Ben Nield states:

The first contract was let to A. Lu Hale of Afton and John Tolman of Fairview. It called for twice a week mail delivery, so the drivers had forty-eight hours to make the trip one way. Assuming this mail contract was a big undertaking, since it was known the snow would be from four to eight feet deep at the higher elevations, the big question faced by drivers was what kind of sleigh would be most practical for the snow road. First used was a

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 14.

²Interview with Thomas F. Burton, Ogden, Utah, March 22, 1961.

³Crook, op.cit., p. 38. ⁴Ibid., p. 39.

toboggan sleigh, with a box about eight feet long, two or three feet wide, mounted on two high sleigh runners. This toboggan was drawn by one horse, which broke trail for the sleigh.

The mail contractors got through the first two years of the contract quite well. But the year of 1890 was known to all of the pioneers of the valley as the "hard winter." The snow was three to four feet deep in the valley and much deeper at the higher levels, so the mail carriers had too big of a job to handle, and the road was closed for about three months. There was no transportation in and out of the valley except by snowshoes and webs. That was the last winter for the toboggan on the mail contract . . . later vehicles used were a buckboard for summer and a covered sleigh with a stove for comfort in the winter.¹

The Crook account of this early period on the Crow Creek road points out:

The first few years of this service proved very difficult. Sometimes the mail was carried on foot or horseback instead of the desired way in wagons or sleighs. In this set-up, stations and camping places were necessary where the men who carried the mail could feed their horses, cook their own meals, and have a place to sleep; also where other travelers could stay overnight if necessary. In the first winters of mail carrying, the snow became so deep in the part of the canyon nearing Montpelier that the mail was hauled in sleighs to a camp known as "Half Way" and from there taken on by men on skis. The men would leave camp at six o'clock in the morning and travel to Montpelier with the outgoing mail, rest an hour or so and return to "Half Way" with the ingoing mail. This trip required twenty-four hours travel. They carried the mail on their backs in waterproof sacks and many times blizzards caused them to lose their way, but storm or not, the mail went through though sometimes two or three weeks late.²

Freighting

Evidently Mr. Hale, who had the government mail contract, hauled passengers as well as the mail. He handled only a little freight, at least at first. Prominent, however, in

¹The News-Examiner (Montpelier, Idaho), June 21, 1962.

²Crook, op. cit., p. 39.

the freight business were the Nield brothers and A. R. Moffat who handled the exporting of dairy products.¹ Commenting on these early men who linked the Saints in this valley with the outside world, Mrs. Burton says:

The mail carrier's task was difficult and dangerous. Likewise that of the freighter. Theirs was a common lot. In the Fall and Spring seasons of the year their difficulties were multiplied. In the Fall during the rain that often fell, the roads were deep with mud on the lower levels while the divide which there were three to cross the snow was too deep to get a wagon through it. It was similar in the Spring with the added danger of snowslides. Many had narrow escapes; no human lives were lost but many horses fared not so well.²

Mr. J. J. Edwards of Freedom, Wyoming, makes this statement with regard to the difficulties and hardships endured by the freighters, he having experienced them:

In the early days of Star Valley they handled their freight with horses and wagon. The roads were not like they are today, sometimes in the spring they were soft and muddy and it would take as much as eight days to make a trip from Star Valley to Montpelier and back.

Sometimes we would get stuck in the mud and it would take from six to eight horses to pull a load and at times we would have to unload and pack it out. And in the spring we would have to transfer from sleighs to wagon twice in one trip. The snow would get so deep that you could hardly get through it. I have seen it drift the snow we would have to shovel eight or ten feet deep to get through sic, and I have seen snow slides when it piled the snow as much as twenty-five feet deep and one hundred yards long. One day when we were going down, a slide filled my sleigh box full of snow. In the winter time the freighters would travel mostly in bunches in order to keep the road open.³

¹Bessie Merritt, op. cit., p. 19.

²Burton, op. cit., p. 23.

³Interview with J. L. Hepworth, June 10, 1961. He had obtained this information as a result of an interview with Mr. J. J. Edwards.

The Crow Creek road

The Crow Creek route between Montpelier and Afton, most of which ran through Idaho, soon became the popular route. Camping spots soon became prominent along the way. An old resident recalls:

There are some very interesting stories concerning these stopping places along the road. . . . a few of the names which will bring memories of adventure and thrill to those who traveled the freight and mail roads are: Deer Creek, Couzens ranch, Salt Works, White Dugway, Half Way, Samson's Tree, Beaver Canyon, Thomas' Fork, Caveen's Retreat, Whisky Flat, and Camp-Give-Out. All of these were well known to the early traveler. Farther on we hear of Snowslide, The Elbo, The Falls, and Montpelier Canyon. There was a cutoff sometimes traveled to avoid the dreaded Beaver Canyon. This way the traveler climbed the long divide out of Thomas Fork Canyon, took the Hale's Turntable, and then scooted down the Devil's Dive hoping to land right side up in the bottom of the canyon.¹

Mr. A. M. Rich tells of this route between the Bear Lake community and Star Valley in his "History of Montpelier." He says:

The chief road to Star Valley was by way of the Crow Creek Road although travel also proceeded by way of Georgetown Canyon, etc. The route followed up Montpelier Creek, crossed the headwaters of Preuss Creek, crossed the Great Basin Divide and then dropped onto the Crow Creek drainage which led out to Star Valley. The passage was steep and treacherous and in foul weather extremely hazardous. During some winter months heavy freighting was impossible and even the mail had to be carried on only the front bob or on snowshoes. Older freighters used open sleighs and thought their boys were "softies" when they designed a cover and room for a small stove.²

The spot on the Crow Creek road known as "Half Way" (see Fig. 8) became a popular stop for many of the mail

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 39.

²The News-Examiner, January 2, 1958.



Fig. 8.--The "Half Way" House on the
Crow Creek Road.

carriers, freighters and travelers on this route. About 1905, Aroet (Roe) Hale and Achiso Corsi, who had contracted the mail route, built an inn at this location along with a stable to care for about twenty teams. Later, other families were hired to operate this enterprise, which offered both meals and rooms as well as stable service.¹

About 1907, Benoni G. Wilkes began hauling commodities into the valley for Burton's Mercantile in Afton. He found the trip to be hard and arduous, requiring from four to seven days en route depending upon the weather. After several years of freighting, he homesteaded the land at the "Half Way" stop.² This waystation was a favorite spot and is remembered with fond memories by many of the older people still living today (1962).

Accounts tell of freighting various articles into the valley over this route. There were farming implements, furniture, staple foods, and bolts of cloth.³ Produce of the farmers in the valley was freighted out or driven in herds or flocks. Albert E. Kennington has told this author how cheese and butter were loaded on large freight wagons in the late fall and hauled out. Sometimes cold or snowy weather caught them and slowed or stopped the heavily laden wagons,

¹Ibid., June 21, 1962.

²Ibid., January 2, 1958.

³Interview with Albert E. Kennington, Afton, Wyoming, December 28, 1961.

but the weather was usually so cold that it acted the part of a refrigerator and preserved the stalled commodities. Occasionally, however, warmer weather would soften the butter that was being transported, turning it rancid. This usually did not create a total loss for the producer, however, for it was brought back and reworked, then mixed with sweet butter. Old-timers claim the mixture was as good as the original sweet butter.¹

Wallace I. Gardner recalls that as a young man he took part with others in driving several herds of pigs to the railroad at Montpelier over the Crow Creek route. From there they were transported to market. As he reminisced he said:

We got started early in the morning with these pigs-- about four A.M. At first they were rather unruly, but usually they settled down and went along fine until the sun got up high enough to be too warm, then they headed for the shade to rest and sleep, and we did the same. Along about four in the afternoon they were usually hungry and we fed them, then we put them on the trail until dark. Pigs really aren't so hard to drive if you know how.²

Likewise cattle and sheep were driven to the railroad for shipment to market.

At first there was no state or county aid to keep the road open. In fact it was the responsibility of the mail carriers and the freighters to keep the road passable. Crook says:

¹Interview with Wallace I. Gardner, Afton, Wyoming, December 28, 1961.

²Ibid.

Almost every one who passed over the route carried a shovel, a pick, and an axe, and plenty of matches. Timber was plentiful, a fact that saved much suffering from the cold. Later on parties were organized to repair bad places in the roads.¹

Often in the spring, after a heavy winter, large parties of men would arm themselves with shovels and with teams go to the mountain passes to try to open the road. Occasionally they would have to shovel through large masses of snow that had piled into the road due to snowslides.²

Even after the counties took over, it was difficult to keep this road open and repaired inasmuch as it lay in two states and three different counties (Bear Lake and Caribou Counties in Idaho and Lincoln County in Wyoming). To be sure, after the first rugged years the county governments appropriated means to help maintain roads in their respective counties; but Caribou had little interest in the road because it was of little importance to the growth of that county. It therefore failed to keep up its part of the road. Nonetheless, with the progress in the valley, this road was improved and eventually graveled. Vehicles likewise improved. Mrs. Crook comments:

White top buggies became the favored method of travel by people entering and leaving the valley. Several stage companies were organized. Horses were placed at stations along the route and with a change of teams one fairly flew along.³

An interesting advertisement appeared in the December 5, 1902, copy of the Star Valley Independent regarding fares on the stage line. It follows:

¹Crook, op. cit., p. 40. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.

Daily Stage Services from Montpelier, Idaho, to Afton, Wyoming. Elegant New Rigs, Good Horses, Careful Drivers. Fare to Montpelier--\$2.00. Baggage allowance 30 pounds. All Fares to be paid in advance.¹

Despite improvements, the Crow Creek road remained steep, narrow, and treacherous. It was abandoned as a mail route about 1909, but only temporarily. Ben Nield explains:

Near the expiration of the Hale and Corsi mail contract there was considerable controversy as to which road the mail should be brought in on--the Crow Creek Road from Montpelier as it had been, or from Cokeville to Afton, staying within the state of Wyoming. A number of bids were submitted, and Martin Winters of Montpelier was the successful bidder, much to the disappointment of the people of Cokeville. A great deal of pressure was brought on the Post Office department so they abolished the contract with Winters, and awarded it to N. J. Christopherson and sons of Afton. Cokeville people believed that the freight lines and stage would follow the mail route, and it would not be possible to maintain and keep two roads open into the valley during the winter months. But it did not work out that way. The freight and stage lines remained on the Crow Creek Road, leaving the mail carrier alone on the road from Cokeville. It was too big an undertaking for so few people to keep this road open during the winter months . . . so after Christopherson's contract was finished it was decided not to use this road any more for the mail.²

When the state of Wyoming and Lincoln County acquired snow removal equipment, the Cokeville road was once again used and has been since that time. In the late 1920's a paved road was made from Kemmerer, Wyoming, through Cokeville and into Star Valley. It was about this date also that the teams of the freighters gave way to the truck lines.³

¹Hyde, op. cit., p. 47.

²The News-Examiner, June 21, 1962.

³Crook, op. cit., p. 41.

Public utilities

In 1902, twenty-three years after the first settlers came to Star Valley, the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company ran a telephone line from Montpelier to Afton.¹ Undoubtedly this modern convenience aided to a degree in relieving the feeling of isolation these early settlers felt.

This telephone line was extended to the lower valley in 1903 and was operated from one exchange in Afton.² This, however, offered poor service, especially to the people in the lower valley. As a result of this poor service a group of farmers there organized and financed the building of a telephone line in that area with an exchange there. This was called the Salt River Telephone Company.³ In 1919 Osborne Low bought this line and operated it for many years as a toll line. This man, prior to buying the lower valley telephone line, was the manager of the telephone office in Afton from 1907 until he moved his interests to the north end of Star Valley.

In connection with Mr. Low it seems appropriate to mention that it was through his influence that the first

¹Clarissa Merritt, "Telephone Service," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 57.

²Ibid.

³Ora Luthi, "Silver Star Dial System," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 58.

electrical power plant was put into operation.¹ Mr. Low, according to Clarissa Merritt, filed a water right on the water in Swift Creek in 1906 for an electric light plant to serve the Afton area. The following year Low, with the aid of a Mr. Slusser, built a generating plant on the stream which served the needs of the people of Afton for several years until the population of the town outgrew the capacity of the plant and it was taken over by a citizen co-op and expanded. It changed hands again in 1924, when it was purchased by Arthur F. Burton.²

¹Clarissa Merritt, "Electric Power in Afton," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 59.

²Ibid.

CHAPTER X

CHURCH AND SCHOOLS

Church units established

In accordance with Latter-day Saint custom and belief, as soon as a few families had settled within a reasonable distance of each other, branches of the Church were organized with a member of the priesthood presiding over the spiritual affairs of the people and assisting to improve their temporal welfare whenever possible. As soon as sufficient families were permanently established, wards were organized.¹

The wards in Star Valley were in the Bear Lake Stake until August 14, 1892, when the Star Valley Stake was organized by Joseph F. Smith. George Osmond was the first stake president with William W. Burton and Anson V. Call as counselors. Included in the new stake were the Afton ward, which had been a ward since 1887; the Fairview, Auburn, Grover, and Smoot wards, all of which had been organized in 1889; and the Thayne and Freedom wards, which were organized in 1891.

¹The pattern of church organization is one of divisions and subdivisions. There are stakes presided over by three high priests known as a stake presidency; these are divided into wards, which are also presided over by three high priests--a bishop and two counselors.

Bedford became a ward in 1896, Osmond in 1901, and Etna not until 1908.¹

The first school

The Latter-day Saints who came to this area were typical of their forebears. The matter of education was part of their religious philosophy, and as a result the rise of schools was accomplished simultaneously with the establishment of wards and branches of the Church.

There is evidence that the first settlers in the upper valley held school during the winter of 1879-80. Lorean Gardner states, "The first school was held in the valley in 1879-80 at Auburn in the home of one of the families with Hyrum Simmons as teacher. The seats and desks were made of logs."² It is evident, however, that this school was short-lived because of the almost complete evacuation of the locale in 1881.³

A school district is organized

The real attempt to establish a school did not come until 1886-87. A session lasting six weeks was held in the home of Charles Green at Afton. "William G. Burton of Evanston, Wyoming, was the teacher. There were practically

¹"Star Valley Stake Record," 1896.

²Lorean Gardner, op. cit., p. 64.

³See discussion in Chapter III.

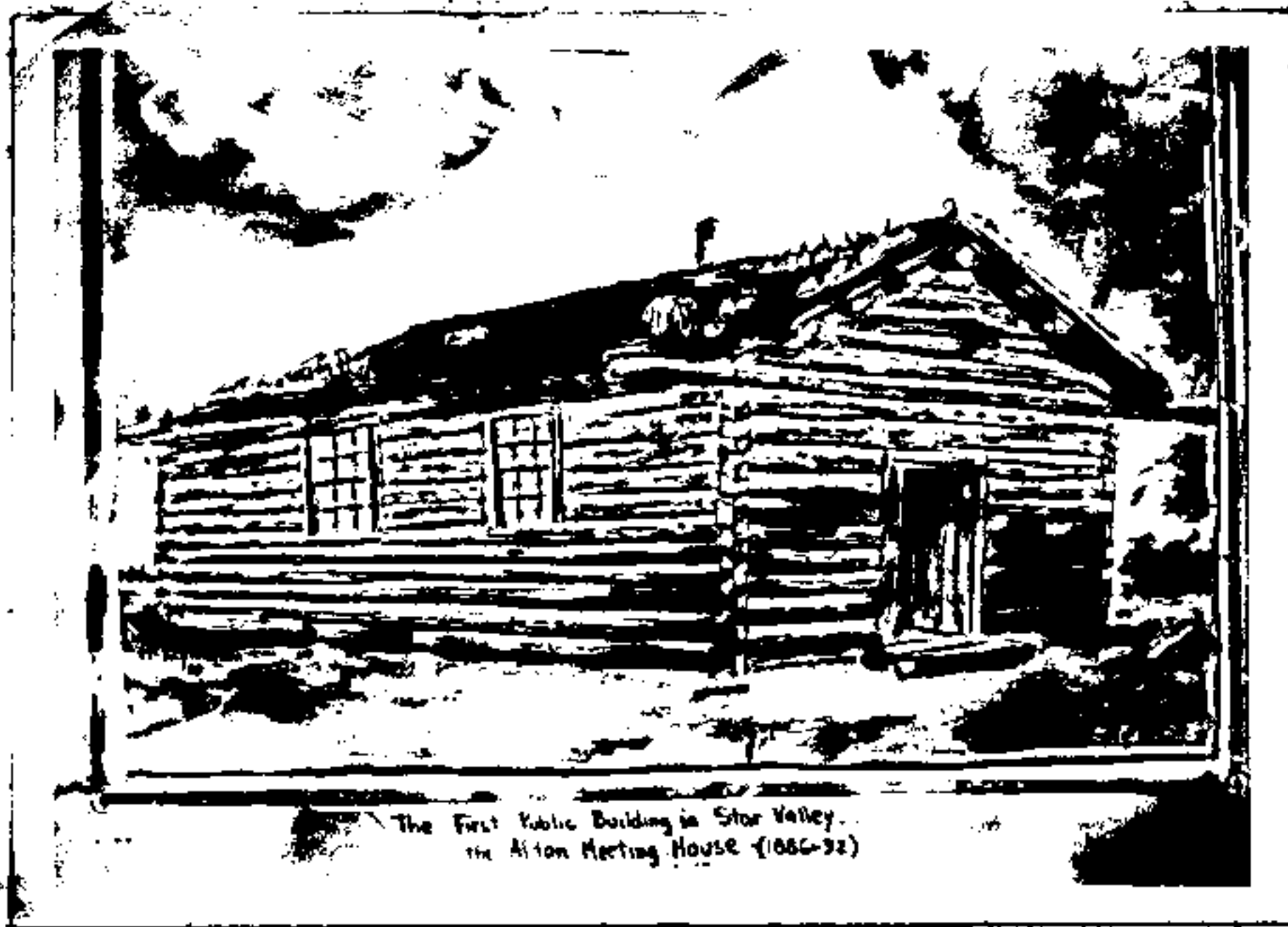


Fig. 9.--First Public Meeting House

no books and attendance was irregular."¹ This short term school year was held primarily to secure enrollment in order that a school district could be organized.

On May 1, 1887, a school election was held in Afton. A school district was organized and a school board was elected. This organization was done under the direction of the local Church authorities to whom the people looked for leadership in every aspect of their lives. The members of the board were Charles D. Cazier, A. Lu Hale, and A. C. McCombs.²

Charles D. Cazier was the son of Charles C. Cazier who was the presiding elder over the Star Valley area at that time. Having recently moved back to Afton from Bennington, Idaho, the Cazier's were familiar with what the Saints were doing to improve education in that area. This experience was naturally very beneficial to the new school board.

Almost immediately construction was begun on a new building, financed by the Church. It was to serve as a church and school house. Regarding this, Mrs. Burton comments:

The log meeting house was completed in 1887 and at once became the school house and the amusement center in addition to the meeting house. Here in the winter of 1887-88 the first school was held under school laws with Sam Bartlett as the teacher. The students and the equipment were a "duke's mixture." Ages ranged from six years up to mature men, all grades in one. For books they used anything they could bring from home or borrow. Often several had to use the same book. Rarely were two books alike. The students were comfortably seated on blocks of

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 10.

²Lovina Leavitt, op. cit., p. 35.

wood or crude benches, and they considered themselves fortunate if they could procure any kind of home-made desk or table.

Let me here describe the log church-school building more fully as to construction. When built, it was the finest building here. The logs were hewn on all four sides. This hewing was done by a Mr. Schaeffer, and though not so smooth on the surfaces, were perfect from end to end as if sawed. . . . It had a rough board floor and the dirt roof sloped to the north and south. The wall height was about eight feet and the roof was the ceiling also. The dimensions of the base were twenty-four by forty feet.¹

Other communities follow suit

Soon after the establishment of a school district in Afton, other communities organized similar districts and erected schools, humble though they may have been. Vilate Turner records the following about the first school in Fairview:

The first school was held in the summer of 1889 with Georgianna Merritt as teacher. She said she had about thirty pupils, all ages and grades. School was held in the log meeting house and fees were paid by the pupils in grain, chickens, butter, or other produce they had. . . . The county would only allow funds for a six month term. The desks were made by fastening a board about eighteen inches wide to the wall with hinges to it so it could be put up against the wall when a dance was being held. The pupils made grooves in the boards with their pocket knives to partition their allotted spaces. The seats were made of rough boards without backs. The blackboard and recitation board in the front of the room. It was heated with a big iron stove placed in the middle of the room. The room had only two windows and a big double door. There was a platform about two feet high used for a stage.

One morning when the teacher arrived, the stove had burned a hole in the floor and was sitting on the ground.²

Merettie Leavitt, commenting on the school at Osmond,

¹Ibid.

²Turner, op. cit., p. 95.

says, "School lasted about three or four months a year. . . . At first it was held only in summer time. . . . Slates were used to write on and there were very few books. Each student furnished his own desk and stool."¹

Indeed the school facilities of the pioneers were makeshift and inconvenient. An account written about the early school conducted in Smoot, for example, gives further evidence of the lack of what moderns consider necessities. It includes this description of a new school building: "The students enjoyed the comforts of the new building, although there was no drinking water, and in the winter the lunches had to be thawed out on an old wood heating stove before they could be eaten."²

Frequently youngsters had to go to school on horseback or on snowshoes, if they were able to make it at all. An experience cited by Vernessa Wright, who quotes an old settler, is illustrative:

One winter we kids had to live right in the school-house because of the deep snow. We would have to get up early enough to have our beds and breakfast cleared away before the teacher brought the rest of the children. Occasionally they caught us in bed. On weekends our folks would bring us some more food for the next week or took us home over the weekend.³

Another commentary verifies the fact that the weather was a major factor in determining how long school was in session:

¹Lovina Leavitt, "Star Valley Schools," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 118.

²Crook, op. cit., p. 123.

³Wright, op. cit., p. 110.

The schools in the early years were often forced to close for short periods due to blizzards and heavy snows. From many homes there were no roads. The children followed cattle trails of their own through the deep snow. The drifts almost covered the cabins. Steps had to be made before children could leave home and at times only the larger boys reached the school.¹

Progress in education

The schools in Star Valley began to grow and improve as soon as they had some direction and organization under the local school boards. The "Afton Ward Record" brings to our attention the fact that the schools early received county funds. Under the date of July, 1891, it mentions the fact that "the schools of Star Valley draw more appropriations for school purposes alone than the aggregate amount of taxes paid into the county treasury."² With these additional funds the settlers enthusiastically pushed their education program forward. New structures began to be erected--some exclusively for school purposes, but more often for church and school use. If the church building was used for a classroom, the funds appropriated by the county could be spent for improving other facilities.

Inasmuch as the Church authorities made Afton their headquarters, and partly because of its central location, Afton soon became the cultural and educational center of the valley. The smaller communities looked to her for leadership.

¹Burton, op. cit., p. 20.

²"Afton Ward Record."

By 1900, residents of Afton deemed their twelve-year-old meeting house inadequate as a school house and began construction on an elementary school building. In the August 1, 1900, edition of the Deseret News the following appeared:

The people of Afton are fully abreast of the times in general improvements and are now building a fine school house at a cost of about \$5,000.00. It is being erected on the "pay-as-you-go" principle which seems to be more popular with the people here than bonding.¹

The unique problem of Freedom

The community of Freedom is said to be the only town in the United States which is in two states and three counties. Main Street, running north and south, is the state line between Idaho and Wyoming. The Idaho side is bisected by the county line between Caribou and Bonneville Counties.² The other half lies in Wyoming's Lincoln County. While this may be, in some respects, a distinction, it is a situation which imposed some problems.

The first school was held in the home of A. B. Clark with Alice Lee as the teacher. When the log church house was completed in 1889 it served as a school for a time. The Church did not concern itself with whether the pupils lived in Idaho or Wyoming. As the years went by, however, and the states began to assume the responsibility of education, the complexity of the situation made itself manifest. Vernessa Wright writes:

¹The Deseret News, August 1, 1900.

²Wright, op. cit., p. 108.

A school house was built in Idaho by Charles Haderlie. . . . An addition was added some years later making it a two-teacher school. A Wyoming school was built on the Rainey place which was known as the Jackknife School. Idaho children who lived near this school attended there with the Wyoming children, while Idaho and Wyoming students near the Idaho school attended the Freedom Idaho School. Later the Wyoming Jackknife School became overcrowded, so for five years the Frank Lindholm children and others were deprived of their schooling.

The perseverance and diligent effort of Frank Lindholm resulted in an Idaho school. . . .¹

Eventually an agreement between the states involved made it possible for youngsters on both sides of Main Street to attend the same school, each state paying its respective share of the cost.

The high school

By 1909 the people desired to establish a high school. Prior to this time those who wished to obtain an education above the elementary level had to leave home. The Church officials encouraged young people to continue their studies, but in order to do so they had to locate the funds required to support them away from home. Usually they attended Fielding Academy at Paris, Idaho, or Brigham Young College at Logan, Utah.²

Wilford Hyde and Thomas F. Burton were chosen by the school board to act as a committee to establish a high school in Afton. They sought county and state aid in this venture

¹Ibid., p. 110.

²Both schools were owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



Fig. 10.--Public Buildings in Afton
at the Turn of the Century.

and obtained mostly good wishes. They did, however, get the consent of the county commissioners to found a high school with a promise of financial aid when sufficient enrollment could be procured. Accordingly private funds were loaned by Louis C. Jensen and Thomas F. Burton. These two men assumed the financial responsibility for the first school year until enough students were enrolled to enable the district to secure state aid. The first high school class was taught in one room of the elementary school by Wilford Gardner. The next year the second floor of this school was remodeled and used for a high school.

The consolidation of the several small school districts took place in 1912. A temporary chairman of the board of trustees was appointed to carry out the work of consolidation. Louis C. Jensen fell heir to this position and carried out the duties appertaining thereto for three years before he was officially elected. Mr. Jensen, in 1915, made the following entry in the record book of the district:

This first board has tried in every way that was in its power to make this great move of consolidation a success, and at the end of this, the third year, we feel in looking over the conditions, that a great change for better schools has come about. We hope that in the years to come, whoever may be placed in this calling of helping to conduct the affairs of this great work, that they will be faithful to the same, and that the good work may continue on so that this may become the leading school district in this great state of Wyoming.¹

¹"Minute Books of School District 19," quoted by Lovina Leavitt, op. cit., p. 35.

Jack Major was selected as the first superintendent of this school district. Immediately following this organization and appointment in 1915, the school board set up an office. Thereafter they determined to levy a three and one-half mill tax. This matter was put before the voters and passed. Also in 1915 they called for bids on the construction of a high school building to be built of native cobble rock.¹ (This building is still in use today, 1962, although it has become part of a newer structure.) Until such time as the new building could be completed, high school classes were held in the spacious residence of Anson V. Call.

It is interesting to note that on June 10, 1915, the first bills were paid by the newly official District 19. Among the items were a saddle for \$46.50 and a horse (plus expenses therefor) for \$86.50. These were for the use of Superintendent Jack Major.²

Transportation difficulties

Consolidation brought some problems, of course. Foremost among them was the transporting of youngsters from the outlying communities. Not until 1923, however, did the district assume this responsibility. Esther Crook comments that prior to that time:

¹On December 11, 1915, the board accepted the bid of a Mr. Talboe of Provo, Utah, for the construction of the high school. This bid was for \$17,600. Lovina Leavitt, op. cit., p. 35.

²"Minute Books of School District 19," in ibid.



Fig. 11.--The Anson V. Call
Residence, a Temporary High School.

Lucky was the child that had a pony to ride to school, or who had even a pair of skis. As roads were built neighbors took turns in hauling the children to school; and if a person had a good team and a covered sleigh with a stove in it, he could make a good winter wages hauling students to high school at five dollars per person per month.¹

Naturally when the school district took over the transportation in 1923, the situation did not automatically improve. Many students still had relatively long distances to negotiate in order to make connections. Nevertheless transportation facilities improved yearly. By 1930, 1,228 pupils were enrolled in the public schools, and all the high school students were transported to Afton.

The Church assumes a supporting role

Gradually, as the communications improved and the county and state became better organized and able to assume the responsibility of educating the population, the Church, as such, withdrew from the school program. Its influence remained profound, of course. Included in the Sunday spiritual instruction of the Saints were admonitions to "seek wisdom"² because "man cannot be saved in ignorance"³ and "the glory of God is intelligence."⁴ It was undoubtedly this doctrine

¹Crook, op. cit., p. 40.

²Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.

³Doctrine and Covenants 131:6.

⁴Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.

which prompted such vigorous efforts toward schooling early in the history of Star Valley; and today (1962) the descendants of these people remain education-minded as is indicated by the unusually high percentage of young people who seek higher learning.

CHAPTER XI

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

A fertile land

There are approximately 110,000 acres of fertile soil in Star Valley. Of this acreage, about sixty per cent is used as hay meadow and twenty-five per cent for pasturing cows and sheep. Oats, barley, and wheat are the chief products of the remaining fifteen per cent.

Hay meadows produce between a ton and a ton and a half per acre while the alfalfa yield is from two to two and one-half tons. Early the pioneers claimed that the nutritive value of the meadow hay was superior to that of like grasses produced elsewhere, and scientific analysis has since borne out that assumption. The high elevation is credited with making the difference.¹

Seventy to eighty bushels per acre is not an uncommon yield for oats; barley will yield fifty to sixty bushels per acre; and thirty to thirty-five bushels of spring wheat is the usual harvest. "Milling wheat of the finest quality is said to be a sure crop."²

¹Eldon Erickson, "Agriculture," Star Valley and Its Communities, p. 16.

²Ibid.

The pasture--composed chiefly of Kentucky bluegrass, orchard grass, meadow fescue, and brome grass--is of top quality and is presently used for about eight thousand dairy cows and thirty thousand head of sheep. Eldon Erickson reports that wool from Star Valley usually brings one to two cents a pound more than that shorn in other areas; and again the altitude is responsible for the superiority. Poultry does well, and hogs thrive, being "singularly free from disease. The hazard of swine cholera is practically unknown."¹

This abundant yield of Star Valley's fertile acres does not, perhaps, completely fulfill the rash predictions of the early optimist who wrote, "The soil is well adapted for . . . almost any kind of crops raised throughout Northern Utah. . . . (there was) rye growing fully six feet in height, and beets, turnips, cabbage, beans, and other garden products that were not at all injured by the frost, proving clearly that the locality is much more favorable for the cultivation of these things than Bear Lake."² (Italics mine.) Nevertheless such productivity does make the fears of those who deserted the valley in 1881 with the dire prediction that it was too cold for raising grain, seem a little premature.

John Phillips is said to have harvested oats in Grover on August 25, 1886,³ and Leora Rich speculates that Fred

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²The Deseret Weekly (Salt Lake City), July 5, 1885, p. 449.

³Hepworth, op. cit., p. 2.

Brown, Sr., had a wheat crop in Fairview that same year. She says:

Fred Brown, Sr. was the first man in Fairview and perhaps in Star Valley to plant and raise wheat on the flat. His wife drove the team while he planted the first potatoes to be planted and raised in Fairview in 1886. William Pead raised the first rye in Fairview on the foot-hills. Barrus planted wheat on the hills of his place and it was found that the dry farms were best for grain. Lucerne was raised on the level and an abundance of wild hay. Potatoes were not always a sure crop because of frost.¹

It was natural that not every farmer judged accurately the quality of his ground, nor did each season bring consistently the same weather conditions. It was not many years, however, until the residents knew generally what to expect. As has been discussed, the dairying potential of the valley was quickly recognized. It was found that grain grew consistently well and that vegetable growing on any but a family garden scale was extremely risky.

Dobbin has his day

The cow was, in Star Valley as elsewhere--perhaps in Star Valley particularly, the mother of prosperity. Nevertheless without his horses the early farmer would have had to give up in despair. He rode Dobbin to bring the cows from the pasture, he used him to pull the plow, to build the canals, to herd the sheep, and to take the youngsters to school and the family to church. He depended upon him to bring the mail, haul the milk, and harvest the crops. Interesting is Hilda

¹Rich, op. cit., p. 4.

White's description of an early threshing machine:

The early pioneers of Star Valley threshed their grain with a horse-powered thresher which used twelve to fourteen head of horses, traveling in a circle around the power unit which was equipped with long sweeps about twelve feet long and fastened together with chains so that each team pulled on an evener. The driver would stand in the middle with a long whip and keep the teams pulling evenly.¹

In those days power machinery was no competition for horsepower, and when it did appear, it must have amused the local Percheron and Clydesdale population no end. We are again indebted to Mrs. White for a description of the valley's first tractor:

In 1912, Eugene Weber bought the first tractor to come to the valley. It was a huge steam outfit with power enough to pull six plows at one time and for a few years did much of the plowing in the Etna area.

There were no roads or bridges capable of carrying such a heavy load at that time, so the company which delivered the tractor shipped it to Soda Springs, Idaho, and brought it down Tin Cup Canyon. Where the roads would not carry the load, they would pull into the bottom of the canyon and make a temporary road and ford the streams. This outfit was fired with wood and proved to be so slow and expensive that it was finally used to run a sawmill instead of plowing.²

Irrigation

Of all the natural resources in the world, water is probably the most precious. And Star Valley has always had water in abundance. Eldon Erickson says, "No section of the United States can boast of more acre feet of water per acre than Star Valley. It has nine principal mountain streams

¹White, op. cit., p. 86.

²Ibid., p. 85.

from which it secures its irrigation water."¹

The first families, of course, built their homes and staked out their property claims on or near the springs and streams. This method of settlement soon became impossible, however, so culinary water had to be supplied by digging wells; and ditches were plowed to divert the water into a more accessible course. J. L. Hepworth, speaking of Grover, records:

One of the first things the early settlers did was to plow a ditch. Very early a ditch was plowed from the spring east of Grover down through the town so people could have water.

Ole Peterson came in the spring of 1888, plowed and planted a small piece of grain and plowed a ditch. Edmund Hepworth made a dam across Bradshaw Creek and plowed a ditch around the hill down to his garden and oat patch. 1888, the first year of Lars J. Halling's arrival, he plowed a ditch, following the hollow most of the way to Swift Creek--the second ditch out of Swift Creek. Then there is the Thomsen ditch that comes from a spring. . . . E. M. Thurman plowed a furrow around his property and built by Phillip's Creek.²

By the spring of 1888, the men of Grover could plainly see that the available water in the immediate vicinity was already inadequate for their irrigation needs. They began to make plans for building a canal from Swift Creek, eight miles distant. To quote again the Hepworth journal:

The first filings on Swift Creek are dated May 10, 1888. Nearly twenty men filed in that first year. The survey was made by Edmund Hepworth and John Astle, with a hand-made tripod and spirit level.

¹Erickson, op. cit., p. 16.

²Hepworth, op. cit., p. 2.

This canal was eight miles long and constructed at a cost of \$3,000. Men with plows and scrapers, and single-handed, kept at it until it was finished. Much of the success and prosperity that has attended the people of Grover, is due, in a large measure to the construction of that canal. A few years later, in 1895, in order to speed up the stream and to permit late-comers an opportunity to earn canal stock, the lower canal was constructed. This lower canal also reaches further north.¹

Lenore Fluckiger writing on the Bedford-Turnerville area points out that "Irrigation was practiced almost as soon as the first land was cultivated. Some land owners have water rights which date back to territorial days."² Dell Nebeker, water master in 1961 and at present a resident of Grover, verified this by telling the author that almost all of the present water rights were filed by 1889.³

The first ditch in Fairview was made by Fred Brown, James Dinsdale and Henry Harmon. It came out of the Salt River and later from Crow Creek. Leora Rich records that, "When the Deweys and Childs came they made a ditch known as the first Salt River Canal. J. C. Dewey drove his team and plowed the first long straight furrow, three miles long, and the others followed with go-devils and plows and the ditch was soon completed."⁴

Etna was farther from a good source of irrigation water than most of the communities. Hilda White says:

¹Ibid., p. 3. ²Fluckiger, op. cit., p. 76.

³Interview with Dell Nebeker, Grover, Wyoming, June 10, 1961.

⁴Rich, op. cit., p. 3.

Like all other pioneers, these home builders were faced with the problem of irrigation. The Baker Canal . . . was built before 1906, and was soon followed by the McNeel ditch. But these did not provide enough water to meet the needs of the growing community, so the settlers decided to incorporate into a company and started a twenty mile canal to bring water from Salt River.

At a mass meeting called for the purpose, Eugene Weber was elected as president and Carl Cook as secretary. The company was organized, by-laws were drawn up, and the East Side Canal Company started its long hard struggle for water.

With teams and scrapers and hand plows, every settler did his best under the supervision of David M. Ross, their surveyor, and engineer. In 1909, the water from Salt River reached the end of the East Side Canal in Etna.

Thus we may truly say that after seven hard years' work, Etna made the East Side Canal, and the East Side Canal made Etna.¹

People in the Smoot area built the Cottonwood reservoir for irrigation purposes. Richard Johns was foreman for the construction of the dam, and all the cement used in the dam was carried up the canyon on pack horses.²

Each community had similar experiences, and from these small beginnings grew the efficient operation of today's modern canal companies. It is not within the scope of this study to give a detailed account of the growth of the irrigation system. Suffice it to say that the men who pioneered Star Valley were grateful for the abundant water supply and tried to use it to the best advantage of all.

¹White, op. cit., p. 82.

²Bruce, op. cit., p. 123.

CHAPTER XII

FROM HERITAGE TO DESTINY

Star Valley is as beautiful today as it was when the white man first discovered it more than a century ago. Its natural beauty remains unmarred by smokestacks or industrial haze. A Swiss cheese plant and a small aircraft factory¹ (the runway of which is surrounded by green pastures) are the nearest thing to an assembly line that has ever been there. The nearest railway is fifty miles distant, and there is no bus service into or out of the valley. Modern highways and fine automobiles make isolation in today's world a very relative thing; but Star Valley is relatively isolated even today.

Continuing in the spirit of their pioneering fathers, Star Valley residents through the years have tried to make the most of what they had, and they have had an abundance of wildlife and natural beauty. In addition to making their farm land productive, they have made tourists and out-of-state hunters welcome. Their primitive mountain terrain is visited by hundreds of people each year. Big game attracts the hunters, and avid fishermen from everywhere are eager to try their luck in the trout-filled waters. Accommodating

¹This refers to Call-Air Corporation of Afton, a company which manufactures small agricultural airplanes.

tourists and outfitting and guiding hunters is a profitable business. Thus these people have capitalized on the chief of their natural resources--nature itself.

There are approximately 5,000 people who reside in Star Valley permanently, and there are many others who still call it "home" although they live elsewhere in the interest of making a living. The farms, productive though they may be, will only support so many people, and a good percentage of the young people seek their fortunes elsewhere. But it is not without regret; for most of them are avid sportsmen who believe there is no place in the world like their valley. To understand how they feel, one must be an outdoorsman--must know the thrill of a fight-to-the-finish battle with a three pound rainbow trout and appreciate the magnificent view of a six-point buck brought close by a Weaver K-4 scope.

There are other things that draw the people of the valley close together--their common faith and ideals. They have, over the years, built a fine school system. Their high school, still located in Afton, boasts a modern physical plant, an unexcelled spirit, and the whole-hearted support of the whole valley. They have somehow established a tradition of "going on to college." The question is not, "Are you going to college?" but "Which university do you plan to attend?" One recent graduating class had sixty per cent of its membership enroll in institutions of higher learning, and it is not unusual to have several carloads of adults

driving the 240 mile round-trip distance to Logan, Utah, twice weekly for evening classes at the university there.

The Church has played a major role in the lives of these people from the beginning, although persecution of the Mormons has long since ceased to be a factor. The population remains about ninety-five per cent Latter-day Saints. The Star Valley Stake today has twelve wards--three of them in Afton; and although the spirit of competition is keen in basketball, softball, and M.I.A. road shows, there is an unusual spirit of unity when it comes to quorum projects, missionary service, or fund-raising.

The culture remains Mormon culture. Beautiful, modern chapels have been erected in every hamlet. Most of the social functions are Church-sponsored and are held either in the recreation halls in these buildings or in the social hall of the Stake House in Afton. Almost on a par with the weather as a topic of conversation is the welfare of this or that missionary who is preaching the Gospel abroad.

The spirit is much the same for the Mormon people of Star Valley today as that expressed by William W. Burton in a verse used as part of a historical pageant presented in 1915:

Here we dwell mid Rocky Mountains,
 Where the breath of Heaven is sweet,
 Blest with lakes and crystal fountains,
 Israel's home, a safe retreat.
 Now the world can scarcely find us,
 Where we here in peace reside;
 Deserts, lakes and mountains bind us,
 Nature guards on every side.

Once the Indian with his brothers,
 Lorded over where we stand,
 Never dreaming aught of others
 From a far and distant land,
 Who were shortly coming over
 In these wilds to make a home;
 Like the flocks before the drover
 O'er the widespread plains to roam.
 Soon the Pioneers were coming,
 Spade and pick and axe in hand;
 Nor was heard a sound of murmuring
 As they waded through the sand;
 O'er the mountain rills descending,
 O'er the rivers spreading wide;
 Happy pilgrims, onward bending,
 Pleased to know that God did guide.
 On they press'd, though faint and weary,
 Where the wolves and Indians roam,
 Searching through the deserts dreary
 For our lovely mountain home;

.
 We are thankful God has blessed us,
 Led us like a chosen band,
 When the foeman's hand oppress'd us,
 To this happy, peaceful land.
 Now we are in peace abiding,
 Where the mobbers fear to come,
 In the mountain tops residing,
 Thank the Lord for such a home.¹

The heritage of Star Valley is Mormon heritage, and the people there feel strongly that the destiny of the Church is their destiny, too.

¹Wilde, op. cit., p. 10.

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Kemmerer Gazette. Kemmerer, Wyoming. June 20, 1952. Article, "The Last of the Whitney Gang Pardoned by Governor."

Logan Leader. Logan, Utah. September, 1880. Article, "Star Valley Open for Settlement." The name of this paper was later changed to the Herald-Journal.

Linford, Velma. "Star Valley and Swiss Cheese," Improvement Era, XL (October, 1937).

News-Examiner. Montpelier, Idaho. June 21, 1962. Article, "Crow Creek Road Important Travel Link."

Star Valley Independent. Afton, Wyoming. Publication began in 1901.

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The Palantic. Salt Lake City, Utah. October, 1887. Vol. I. A monthly journal devoted to the exposition of truth and error.

Personal Interviews

Burton, Thomas F. Approximate age 93. Son of W. W. Burton who went to Star Valley in 1886. This man was about sixteen years of age at the time.

Erickson, Betsy. Approximate age 80. She spent her entire lifetime at Fairview, Wyoming, recalling many of the early events there.

Gardner, Wallace I. Approximate age 75. A lifelong resident of the area and recalls many of the events there-- especially in connection with the rise of the dairy industry.

Hepworth, J. L. Approximate age 58. For thirty years this man has been keenly interested in collecting historical material concerning Star Valley. He has collected a

great quantity of material as well as having interviewed many of the old-time residents now deceased.

Kennington, Albert E. Approximate age 89. Prior to moving to Star Valley about 1887 he lived in the Bear Lake settlements and recalls many of the events pertaining to the Mormon polygamy problems and the settlement of the area.

Pope, Arden. Approximate age 58. He recalls hearing as a boy about the two Whitney brothers in the Cokeville area.

Reeves, Janice. An interview with this young woman revealed that she had interviewed Joseph Welch in the summer of 1958 just prior to his death. He was the son of Ben Welch who came to the valley sometime in the 1870's.

Smith, Molly. Approximate age 70. She lived in Fairview, Wyoming, as a child and young woman and was able to recall many of the events pertaining to that area.

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Meservy, Joseph Robert. "A History of Federal Legislation Against Mormon Polygamy and Certain United States Supreme Court Decisions Supporting Such Legislation." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, Brigham Young University, 1947.

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Burton, Maud Call. "Pioneering Star Valley." MS. 1946. Written for the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Afton, Wyoming. The manuscript is in possession of the author, Afton, Wyoming.

Hepworth, J. L. "History of Grover." MS. 1961. In possession of the author, Rexburg, Idaho.

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A HISTORY OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINT SETTLEMENT
OF STAR VALLEY, WYOMING

Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of History and Philosophy of Religion
Brigham Young University
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

Ray M. Hall

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ABSTRACT

The Latter-day Saints were good colonizers, possibly because they were repeatedly forced by persecution to seek new homes in the wilderness. Having established themselves in Salt Lake Valley (1847), they began almost immediately to expand their domain. Their Prophet, Brigham Young, sent groups of Mormons to colonize the surrounding valleys, and within a few years there were many Mormon settlements beyond the bounds of Salt Lake Valley. Bear Lake Valley in southeastern Idaho and northern Utah was one of these early settlements.

Star Valley--thus named by Moses Thatcher, an Apostle in the Church who thought it was a "star among valleys"--lay in the territory of Wyoming some sixty miles beyond the Bear Lake Valley. Because of its extreme isolation it was slow to attract permanent settlers, although it was used for summer pasture by the Bear Lake people and it was traversed by many Oregon immigrants who followed the Lander Cut-off.

Persecution followed the Mormons westward, however, and their doctrine of plural marriage made them targets for abuse. National anti-polygamy legislation was welcomed by the Idaho legislators in particular, and they proceeded to enact even more stringent laws of their own. This encouraged local law enforcement officers to harass the Mormons to such

an extent that once again many of them decided to move. Some of those from the Bear Lake settlements, as well as from other areas, sought refuge in Star Valley, where they were protected not only by the inaccessibility of the valley but by the friendly attitude of Wyoming officials as well.

This paper is an attempt to record in permanent form the history of the early settlement of this mountain retreat-- the trials and tribulations, the joys and achievements of those who braved the frontier to bring civilization to this primitive area.

To obtain information the author interviewed early settlers of Star Valley, sometimes recording on tape their discussions for future reference. He consulted Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming history books, Church history books, biographies of Church leaders, journals, official stake and ward records, county records, newspaper files, personal diaries, and historical documents. He also corresponded with several former residents of Star Valley to get data. All collected information was typed on cards and filed in categories. This made the organization of the paper relatively simple.

Beginning with a description of the general area and the earliest recorded visits of the white man, the account then discusses the primary reasons for the settlement-- persecution of the Mormons in nearby Bear Lake Valley, and the attractive potential of Star Valley as a homestead area. The colonization of the upper valley is treated separately

from that of the lower valley, but in subsequent chapters the two are discussed simultaneously. There is a discussion of pioneering in general and then special attention is given to such areas as industry, folklore, transportation and communication, agriculture, and education.

Star Valley has a rich heritage. Settled by Mormons whose religion influenced every act of their lives, its culture is definitely Mormon culture. The valley has retained, up to the present, something of the spirit of those who pioneered there. But only the elderly now recall the beginning; and the author feels that, in accordance with Latter-day Saint philosophy, their story should be preserved to inspire the coming generations.

ABSTRACT APPROVED:

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